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THE UNIVERSITY OF ALBERTA

A STUDY OF TIBETAN TANTRIC PSYCHO-RELIGIOUS TECHNOLOGY

BY

Ⓒ Brian J. Given

A THESIS
SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH
IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY

EDMONTON, ALBERTA
FALL 1986

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled A Study of Tibetan Tantric Psyco-Religious Technology
submitted by Brian J. Given
in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
in Anthropology

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to the memory of my parents, Jim and Phyllis Given.

May they have happiness and the cause of happiness and may they be apart from suffering and the cause of suffering.

ABSTRACT

This work presents a study of Tibetan Buddhist tantric ritual practices within the context of an ethnographic description of the Lam Drä ritual cycle of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan tantric Buddhism.

The ritual system is analyzed within its own frame of reference, and an "emic" model is presented of Tibetan esoteric psychology.

In addition, it is argued that most cultures have available a range of psycho-technologies which are self consciously predicated upon the assumption that knowledge is state-specific with regard to the consciousness which embodies it. For this reason it is suggested that a transpersonal approach to the study of ritual and meditation is a necessary adjunct to our methodological tool-kit.

Also, the work argues for a general theory of ritual. The author presents a biogenetic structuralist model (a synthesis of semiotic and biological structuralisms) for the ritual control of experience.

This analysis of human ritual, based upon a set of Tibetan tantric teachings, consists in a model of mind and a complex statement regarding the nature of our species. It is pointed out that the author's Tibetan informants are heir to carefully preserved oral traditions which have evolved over several thousand years of esoteric ritual practice, which has been consciously evaluated with regard to its epistemological and pedagogical utility. Nor has their research lacked rigor. Not only have many of the authors teacher/informants completed decades of intense mental training, their teachers have been in a position to guide the tantric practices of large numbers of initiates and to collect information regarding the probable phenomenological outcomes of specific meditation practice.

It is argued that it is clearly necessary for western scientists to examine Tibetan psychology both with, and without, reference to Tibetan Buddhist tantric hermeneutics. It will also be necessary to examine physiological as well as phenomenological correlates of tantric practice.

The author suggests that such an enterprise will inevitably require the re-formulation of our à priori assumptions regarding the nature of mind and the process of knowing.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This work will present a model of the phenomenon of religious ritual-initiation and the practice of ritual-drama among Tibetan Tantric ritual practitioners in Northern India and North America.

I shall delineate the beginnings of a paradigm which will place Tibetan mystical initiation and practice of ritual-drama within a theoretical framework appropriate for the more general study of human ritual-initiation.

The ethnographic focus for this project is the Lam Drā Lobsche ritual-complex which is the more esoteric form of the Lam Drā initiation ritual cycle originated by the sage Virupa at the ancient Nalanda University, and currently a central teaching for the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism.

In order to set up our conceptual apparatus for a discussion of the issues at hand it will be necessary first to arrive at an acceptable though, (due to the nature of this project), tentative operating definition of the phenomenon of religious ritual, and of the subset of ritual-initiation.

Ritual

Broadly we might class as ritual, formal actions which are primarily symbolic. Secondly we might narrow this definition to include only those actions or sets of actions which are associated with religion. Such a distinction has the advantage of eliminating from the rubric of ritual, trivialities of formal behaviour, although it has the disadvantage of presupposing a clear notion of what precisely comprises religion. While such a definition of religion is in fact lacking in our discipline, I shall not and indeed cannot address that issue until later in this work. For the moment then, I accept Wallace's (1966:104) "religion is a set of rituals, rationalized by myth" formulation by treating ritual as the set of activities which comprise religion.

Talcott Parsons would include ritual within his concept of "generalized symbolic media" of human interaction (1963, 1964). As such, ritual exists as a "symbolic control system" in which as with other media of communication such as spoken language, the symbolic elements which are manipulated do not have inherent valence or meaning but "signify commodities which do" (Parsons 1963:39).

Further, ritual embodies a finite and often highly truncated set of "multi-vocal" (Turner 1961, 1969) symbolic elements which coalesce diverse sets of meanings across broad ranges of cognitive domains as well as situational and semiotic contexts.

Turner's concept of multi-vocality implies that diverse and complex conceptual and perceptual world-views, "cognized realities," or phenomenological complexes may be semantically encapsulated and rearranged within the act of articulating sets of relationships and processes in the immediate context of the ritual. It is further the case that ritual symbolism may integrate phenomena within a single semiotic matrix, independent of variables of time or space which would ordinarily segment them into separate domains or realms of experience.

Symbols, as the mental tools of ritual may in fact have some inherent meaning, that is to say, they may function as icons wherein there is some sensory or conceptual patterning shared by a symbol's form and all or part of its full semiotic range. Such ritual elements may be said to have inherent meaning, although this does not necessarily delimit their operating range as part of the generalized media of social interaction within which they constitute operators. This domain of inherent meaning may be considered as one of the set of meaning systems which are integrated by ritual-symbol systems.

So ritual then may be seen as a system of semiotic operators which function as cognitive/phenomenological devices to integrate within a control system diverse elements and processes of human consciousness in a matrix which is outside of normal spatial and temporal determinants of boundaries and relationships among elements.

In this sense ritual operates upon mind holistically cutting across the segmentation or canalization of consciousness (Laughlin and Stephens 1980) which is the outcome of cultural conditioning.

It is of course this quality of ritual which makes possible the reorganization of cognitive models and meta-models implied by the phenomenon of ritual-initiation.

Rites of Initiation

Rites of initiation may be treated as a special case under the more general concept of Rites de Passage (Van Gennep 1909). Van Gennep coined this latter term to describe rituals which are the vehicle whereby an individual's transition from one status or state of being to another is accomplished within his culture (Gluckman 1962). Van Gennep observed that the process of rite de passage generally involved the separation of the individual from the group. This is followed by a period of "marge" or liminality where the individual is in a state of limbo or suspension followed by a process of "agrègation" or integration into the new status or state of being.

Van Gennep was primarily interested in the phenomenon of rite de passage as a social process, and so emphasized the function of initiation in changing social status rather than its impact upon the broader world-view of the initiate.

Although interest in rites de passage was renewed in the 1950's and '60's, relatively little attention has been paid to the capacity of initiation to re-arrange and transform the individual's experience of self and of that which he perceives as salient and real. This despite a plethora of ethnographic data regarding this transformation in our informant's phenomenology as the result of initiation-rituals and subsequent ritual activity (Shearer 1978, Stevens 1978, Webber 1979, d'Aquili et al 1979, Laughlin et al 1984).

The above raises the question "initiation to what?" I shall attempt to furnish an answer by taking a closer look at the anthropological treatment of the phenomenon since Van Gennep's seminal work at the beginning of this century.

Initially the discipline used the universality of initiation rites as a vehicle for the discussion of evolutionary models.

Unilineal evolutionists argued that the commonality of such practices was the result of parallel evolution from a common state whereas the diffusionist school argued for evolution from common cultural loci (Allen 1967).

Frazer and Crawley attempted to delineate the meaning of initiation rites within their field-situations. The former argued that such rituals acted to assimilate the initiate to his totem (Frazer 1900:422-426) while the latter observed their association with sexual taboos (Crawley 1927). Several psychoanalytically oriented attempts were made to account for this phenomenon between 1920 and 1954 (Freud 1922:281, Reik 1946:105-116, Bettelheim 1954:19) and also more recently (Paule 1982). These will be dealt with in greater detail later on. It is noteworthy that until the 1950's no systematic analysis of cross-cultural data had been used inductively to derive a model of ritual-initiation. Early anthropologists and later psychoanalysts used anthropological data regarding initiation rites primarily as a source of examples for the support rather than the formulation of theory.

Later theorists used cross-cultural data inductively in an attempt to formalize the study of the phenomenon (e.g. Whiting, Kluckhohn and Anthony 1958, Brown 1963, Cohen 1964, Young 1965, Saucier 1972). Unfortunately such formalization was fraught with methodological problems (Norbeck et al 1962). Not the least of these was the difficulty in deciding just what constituted an initiation rite. Establishing boundaries for the phenomenon has been complicated by a tendency on the part of various authors to deliniate criteria which exactly fit their own limited field situation. Whiting's three central criteria for transition ceremonies include genital mutilation and injunction to avoid the company of women, along with painful hazing, and tests of manliness. Needless to say such criteria were inappropriate for use with his student Brown's (1963) study of female initiation rites among the Mundurucú.

This lack of consensus regarding the classification of particular rituals as initiation rites has been the direct result of a failure to consider initiation within the broader context of ritual of which it forms a sub-set. Thus scholars have developed operational definitions which exclude one or another sex (Whiting 1958 et al, Brown 1963), are limited to one age group (Brown 1963), or one age group within one sex (Young 1965), must apply only to adolescents (Young 1965), must be universal for the members of one sex (Cohen 1964), which require genital mutilation (Cohen 1964) are limited to indoctrination into the customary practices of the group (Cohen 1964), must be conducted by the group and not focussed upon a single individual (Cohen 1964), exclude the opposite sex from any participation, even as witnesses (Whiting et al 1958). Young goes so far as to require that where a series of initiation events extends over a period of years, "only the most elaborate is to be considered" (Young 1965:12).

Clearly such differences in criteria must lead to considerable disagreement regarding appropriate empirical referents which are diagnostic of the phenomenon of initiation.

Further, so far we have failed to include in our taxonomies of initiation-ritual the broad range of initiation rites in which participation is voluntary and which is often definitory of epistemological elites.

Further while a vast array of data exists documenting extensive culturally prescribed psycho-physical preparation as criteria for access to each successive level of initiation, often lasting for many years (Katz 1982, Laughlin et al 1984, Evans-Wentz 1958, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971, Reed 1973, Jorgensen 1972) little attention has been paid to the ontological operating range of the ritual-initiation process.

Most workers in this area have made little attempt to integrate the phenomenon with theoretical positions which they purport to hold with regard to other psycho-social phenomena. In fact most attempts to analyze ritual-initiation ignore recent more general developments in the theoretical treatment of ritual, reflecting instead, early structural-functionalism.

Our informants, on the other hand, frequently tell us that their initiation rituals are not merely markers of changes in social life-phase but moreover that they facilitate dramatic evolutionary shifts in the pattern and elements of experience in the individual both during and after the initiation (Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971, Katz 1982, Ring 1974).

There is extensive evidence that certain initiation rituals precipitate the patterning of the individual's awareness in modes of consciousness which were previously not part of his experience. There is further evidence that the aftermath of initiation may be characterized by long-term changes in the awareness of the initiate, that is to say, initiation may facilitate stable psycho-physical change as reflected in the phenomenology of the individual.

A further deficit in our treatment of initiation results from a tendency to treat the ceremony as an isolated event apart from the often extremely lengthy period of preparation which is often prerequisite for access to it. Some authors, (e.g. Whiting et al 1958, Katz 1982, Jung 1944, 1952, 1956) have taken this preparation into account though none have considered preparation and ceremony as a single phenomenon. In addition, no scholars have attempted to model initiation as an on-going process which includes ritual activity before, during, and after the actual ceremony which marks initiation.

Again our informants tell us that the preparation is essential because (to use a Tibetan metaphor) its results are fertile soil; the initiation ceremony plants the seed, but that only the individual's regular, (usually daily) repetition of the initiation process can nourish and bring forth the fruit which is the goal of a ritual cycle (Katz 1972, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971, Laughlin et al 1984).

The ethnographic record then, requires a theoretical treatment of initiation-ritual which considers the phenomenon as a complex of related ritual activity which may extend throughout the lifetime of the individual and which is capable of transforming his pattern of experience in ways which he perceives as deeply meaningful.

Perhaps some past confusion may be alleviated by recourse to our conceptualization of ritual which must per force subsume rituals of initiation.

First of all, I note that the operating range of the elements and processes of ritual integrate broad ranges of cognitive and social phenomena within a matrix which is beyond the bounds of ordinary experience. Such a matrix necessarily cuts across that range of cognitive elements and processes which form our usual range of awareness but is not limited to that sub-matrix. So ritual is a vehicle with which we access cognitive matrices which may subsume all or part of but are not limited to the reality we ordinarily experience. Ritual then, frees man of the reality of ordinary or "normal waking state" time and space to experience and formulate alternate realities which cut across or render meaningless the categories and constraints of "ordinary" reality.

Our informants have been telling us all along that this is an adaptive, evolutionary process whereby the practitioner's cognized model of reality is transformed into greater isomorphism with that set of principles and processes which comprise natural law (Chagnon 1977, Laughlin et al 1984, Evans-Wentz 1958, Firth 1967).

Initiation as a sub-set of ritual may be understood as a system of semiotic operators which function as cognitive/phenomenological devices to integrate within a control system diverse elements and processes of human consciousness in a matrix which is free of normal spatial and temporal determinants of the boundaries and relationships among its elements.

It is in this non-ordinary "reality," free of the spatial and temporal boundaries of "ordinary" reality (i.e. in an alternate phase of consciousness) that diverse elements and processes of consciousness are freed from the previous matrix within which cultural or sub-cultural conditioning has bound them, exist in limenality or lessened coalescence, and are ultimately re-combined to form a new matrix, a new social and cognitive reality.

To paraphrase Anthony Wallace (1972), ritual is where the work of religion is done. There is ample support in the literature for the contention that ritual-practitioners usually regard their practice as one which makes possible more ontologically valid reality-experience.

Reichel-Dolmatoff's Amazonian informants refer to "seven levels of knowing" which may be sequentially attained through appropriate initiation and ritual practice. Similarly, Marcel Griaule reports in his Conversations With Ogotemele that Dogon secret society initiates seek to attain successive levels of knowing through their ritual-initiation cycle. My Tibetan informants have developed a vastly complex lateral and hierarchical taxonomy of mind-states to be attained through application of ritual as the technology of their epistemological system (Evans-Wentz 1958, Beyer 1978).

It would seem that the question, "initiation to what?" may be answered with reference to shifts in consciousness such that the "reality" experienced by the initiate during the liminal phase of initiation and the reality which he experiences in the post-initiation phase differs dramatically from that which was his former experience. Also implied is a developmental perspective which can account for the presumed greater validity of cognized realities which comprise the experience of adepts within these ritual-epistemologies.

If it is the case that ritual and therefore ritual initiation can function to precipitate experience which is not a part of ~~the~~ "normal waking state" of consciousness as the ethnographic record seems to indicate that it can (Katz 1969, 1982, 1984, Webber 1979, Laughlin 1979,1980, 1983, MacDonald 1984, McManus 1984) then any theoretical formulations which attempt to deal with these phenomena must take data relevant to the production, experience, and ontological consequences of such shifts in phases of consciousness into account.

Critical to the formulations implied by the above is the necessity to model the relationships among ritual process and the cognitive, experiential process which for our informants is the primary focus of ritual activity.

Lam Drä - A Tibetan Tantric Ritual Complex

The theoretical concerns discussed above are particularly relevant to the analysis of Tibetan Tantric initiation and ritual practice. I shall dwell upon ethnographic detail somewhat later. For the present a brief overview of Tibetan Tantrism will suffice to enable us to state the problem with which the present work attempts to grapple.

The Lam Drä initiation cycle which is my primary ethnographic focus was, according to Tibetan historical sources, developed by the Indian Hindu Advidic sage Virupa at the ancient Nalanda University. The Tibetan Buddhists have preserved and passed on then, a ritual system which was developed by and for

Hindus, subsequently adopted by Indian Buddhists who brought these traditions to Tibet around 600 A.D.

There is in fact little evidence that the Tibetans have innovated very much beyond the Northern Buddhist school of the sixth century (Snellgrove and Richardson 1980). The Tibetans have however, done an excellent job of preserving written and oral teachings which they have adopted from India over the last thirteen centuries.

The problem to be elucidated in greater detail throughout this work is that the entire purpose of that ancient school's teachings was its intent to evoke in the individual yogis who applied its techniques a direct experience of Advidic tenets.

Tibetan Tantra in general and the Lam Drā ritual-initiation cycle in particular as present day examples of the ancient tantric school are self-consciously dedicated to the evocation of hierarchically prescribed sequences of experience in the practitioner. This school purports to hold lineages of methodologies which operationalize, in a systematic way, a set of relationships among initiation and ritual practice and the practitioner's phenomenology.

The methodological problem presented by Tibetan ritual initiation and practice is that the ethnographic base is both experiential and ethnographic. The intentionality implicit in the Tantric system requires the evocation of successive experiences in the practitioner which enable him to verify Tibetan Buddhist cosmology. The process of initiation is consciously defined as a life-long "path" predicated upon continual penetration of ever higher levels of insight via direct experience.

Given that this avowedly epistemological enterprise is predicated upon the ritual control of experience, an adequate theoretical formulation must, then, be able to model the relationship between a system of ritual-initiation and the practitioners' experience. Further, such a model must be able to account for short and long term changes in the ritual practitioner's world-view as a consequence of initiation and ritual activity.

Since the inception of the discipline anthropologists have been interested in ritual and ritual-initiation. One might assume then that available theory and methodology would be able to adequately account for these phenomena. Unfortunately existing conceptual and methodological tools seem to cause more problems than they successfully address when applied to a ritual-system as complex as that employed by Tibetan Tantrists, especially when we consider that the system is self-consciously predicated upon the evocation of prescribed sets of direct experiences in the practitioner, each of which forms the institutional and experiential basis for progression to the next.

In fact, I will argue that the Tibetan system is far from unique. Theoretical/methodological biases have resulted in the failure of field-workers to ask the sorts of questions which would allow them to elicit and model technologies for the realization of cosmologies in the cultures they study. For example, Griaule worked for twelve years with the Dogon before his informants felt he was ready to be taught cosmology. Even so, this instruction was given as to a young child.

Similar experiences are reported by other authors (Chagnon 1977, Reichel-Dolmatoff 1971). My Tibetan informants often expressed anxiety that "some scientist" would get ahold of their secret teachings and distort their meaning. Only with years of successive initiation and practice was it possible to gain access to certain information crucial to even a limited overview of the system. Similarly among North American native groups, for example the Tsimshian, very little information is available with regard to certain ritual-initiation practices (e.g. those of the secret societies - John Cove 1983)

It is entirely possible then that an anthropologist might be unaware that the host culture with which he works predicates its concept of maturity upon educational strategies of which he is largely unaware, and to which he does not have access.

In the next chapter I will examine the range of possibilities within current anthropological theory to address Tibetan tantric ritual initiation. We will find the available conceptual and methodological apparatus wanting. New theoretical and methodological perspectives will be explored which are more appropriate for the analysis of the type of institution and sophisticated use of ritual-technology which characterizes Tibetan Tantrism in general, and Lam Drā in particular. Chapter Three consists of a description of my methodoogy, and of the field situations in which my data was gathered.

Chapter Four presents an overview of Tantra based upon the author's early field research. Chapters Five and Six begin the examination of the author's field data regarding Tibetan Tantric practice. These chapters are concerned with the "Nang Sum," or

"Triple Vision" teachings which constitute the first and more exoteric part of the initiation sequence.

I begin the examination of the more esoteric "Gyud Sum," or "Triple Tantra" teachings with Chapter Seven continuing with the most esoteric "Inner Mandala" teachings in Chapter Eight. An overview of three aspects of Lam Drä, "arisings," the "process of creation," and the "process of completion" is presented in chapter Nine.

Chapter Ten will present an overview of Tibetan Tantric epistemology, and will place these strategies within a hermeneutic framework of use to anthropologists. This theoretical framework, based upon my ethnographic data, and speculation regarding the ontological activity range of ritual control strategies, will argue for the need to focus future research, in part, upon the phenomenology of ritual practice and alternate phases of consciousness, as well as their physiological concomitants.

ANTHROPOLOGICAL MODELS FOR RELIGIOUS RITUAL

Scholars have made considerable progress in the theoretical formulations regarding the nature and ontological scope of ritual. There remain, however, serious problems with our methodological and theoretical repertoires. Firstly, while numerous researchers have paid lip service to the necessity of modeling the system in its totality, and some have allowed that the human organism's biological and physiological reality must be included in our formulations (Wallace 1966, and Turner 1979), in practice our range of levels of analysis has been truncated. No theorist has effectively integrated the realm of subjective experience and that of the physiological sub-system which underlies that experience.

I will first address the problem of omission of the "lower" levels of systemic organization.

Biological Man

The two major orientations to the analysis of ritual initiation, one of which sees ritual as a societal coping mechanism, while the other aims to unlock its hidden deep meanings, have given rise to a fallacious division in anthropological theory wherein compatible approaches are seen as competitive.

Structural Functionalism and Semiotic Structuralism

Explanation in anthropology has been greatly hindered by the predominance of two extreme paradigms involving quite different ontological levels of analysis, data admissibility, and paradigm construction.

Structural functionalism concerns itself with forms of social action and the relations between social action and the process whereby social systems are maintained (e.g. Radcliffe Brown 1940, Parsons 1966). The model adopts a generally behaviourist orientation with regard to the function of social categories and institutions.

Attempts by adherents of this school to model issues involving human experience and world-view have tended to be ineffective because, in part, of their emphasis upon role-related action (see Malinowski on culture change 1961, Gluckman on conflict 1963, Radcliffe Brown on Mother's Brother 1924).

The semiotic structuralists argue, quite rightly, that a theory which focuses upon behaviour to the exclusion of experience treats the human cognitive system as a "black-box" and almost inevitably implies unsophisticated and contra-empirical models of cognitive function.

Semiotic structuralism has as its object of analysis the factoring out of the structure of logic, principles of reason, or transformational laws underlying categorical or symbolic thought (e.g. Lèvi- Strauss, Maranda and Maranda). Increasingly, as if to avoid "pollution" through consideration of situational variables, semiotic structuralists have sought refuge in the "purest" levels of cognitive function. Probably because their attempts to address issues of social action have either been elegantly contra-empirical, inelegantly contra-intuitive, or at best, low in explanatory power, (e.g. Lèvi Strauss 1942 on change from elementary to complex structures, Castaneda 1968 on the dynamics of shamanic practice) these theorists have retreated from profane exploration to the study of cultural phenomena which are least vulnerable to the influence of "contaminating" environmental variables (what Lèvi-Strauss would call "contingencies"), hence the move, for example, from kinship to myth as the subject of study.

Clearly, to focus upon behaviour to the exclusion of cognitive phenomena leads to simplistic and often blatantly incorrect (see Piaget 1971) attributions of cognitive system function. At the opposite end of this scale, focus upon mentation only, and that, at only one level of systemic organization, takes no account of the systemic interconnections among levels of cognitive and overt behaviour and organization.

Neither orientation then, permits the efficient incorporation of data from all levels of systemic organization within what Count would call the organism's "biogram" (1973). What is needed is a model of ritual which is capable of including in its purview the full range of levels of systemic organization which are entrained through its practice.

We are compelled to recognize that man is in part a physiological phenomenon. The systemic organization of brain underlies the organization of mind, so our models of mind must be able to incorporate relevant data regarding the physiological process whereby we receive information about and act upon what my Lama informants refer to as "the world of the senses."

Phenomenological Man

Secondly, we must be able to incorporate the realm of experience which is self-consciously addressed by ritual. An adequate model must be able to account for the claimed ontological consequences of the types of evolutionary or transpersonal experiences which for Tantric adepts is the fruition of ritual practice.

This implies that we must be able to take into account that part of the experience which constitutes our data-set which is derived from phases of consciousness other than the "normal waking state."

Thomas Aquinas attributed the efficacy of ritual to external consciousness which he could only categorize externally as spirits or demons. Perhaps, had he had available the concept of the unconscious mind, he might have allowed that ritual could address agencies dwelling therein.

Evolutionists like Tylor and Lang developed the notion that ritual was informed by alternate phases of consciousness consisting in dreams and trance states. They understood that alternate phase experience was problematic for "primitive" man and saw ritual as an attempt to integrate alternate phase experience with that of the normal waking state. Lang went farther in postulating the efficacy of ritual in its own terms, as a veridical experience on the part of "our distant ancestors" and suggested that contemporary "primitives" and some "civilized" individuals may also possess such powers as are addressed by it.

The problematic of alternate phase experience was to some extent suspended by most of the early functionalists who, like Aquinas, externalized the agencies propitiated by ritual, reversing the valence of the Saint's demonic forces and uniting them under the rubric of a collective consciousness which operated through the agency of ritual rather than being manipulated by it. The locus for such an agency was never effectively specified.

Later structural functionalists, informed by the insights of depth psychology in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries conceptualized ritual as an attempt to address unconscious processes and concerns. The locus of the structures which were the source and the target of ritual activity was seen as below that of the discursive intellect.

New formulations have become possible as the result of contemporary scholars having access to recent discoveries in the psychology of consciousness of the 1960's and '70's which rival the discovery of the unconscious in importance. The Transpersonal movement in science which ranges across disciplines from physics (Bohm 1980) to psychology (Tart 1969, 1975) and anthropology (Rubenstein 1984, Singer 1983, Waters 1982, Emerson 1981, Staniford 1981, 1982, Tiller 1978, Jones 1982, Katz 1983) consists in a growing group of scholars who conceive of ritual as informed by and elicitative of alternate phases of consciousness which may be the key to an adaptive developmental expansion of the range of awareness potential in our species. These scholars then, see ritual, or rather some ritual, as having its source in consciousness informed by a fuller range of the experience potential of mankind. In this sense, ritual is seen as coming from "above" the discursive intellect, and as epistemological technology.

We need then, a model which can account for the full range of ontological phenomena which are active in the context of ritual. We need to address our informants' consistent claim that ritually derived experiences comprise and are the key to more evolutionarily advanced and veridical states of mind than those experienced by non-practitioners. Such a model must not treat the physiological component of mind/brain as a black-box but must be capable of incorporating the full range of relevant data from neurophysiology to the experience of alternate phases of consciousness.

I will briefly examine two new movements in science each of which addresses part of our problem. I will demonstrate that in fact the same phenomena are addressed by both in mutually compatible ways. Transpersonal anthropology and the Biogenetic Structuralism movement in anthropology will be explored with a view to affecting a merger facilitative of a truly synthetic model of the phenomenon of human religious ritual.

Toward a Synthesis in Theory

Thomas Aquinas externalized the "forces," the aspects of consciousness which were attracted or called into being by ritual as demons or spirits. Beings were invoked or brought into being through ritual. Their nature was external to the nature of man.

Tylor and Lang argued that ritual was an attempt to address experiences derived in dream and trance states which were intrinsic in man.

The early functionalists in some measure subsumed both approaches. Ritual was derived from the operation of a collective consciousness, although ritual operated as an external control system vis a vis the individual. The collective consciousness which was intrinsic in human society acted through ritual to manipulate individual consciousnesses.

More recent functionalists see ritual as the attempt to address implied needs of the unconscious mind which underlies our construction of "reality."

A general movement in science, Structuralism has attempted to address the question of the form of relationship between levels of mind which characterizes the conscious/unconscious dialogue.

Before continuing, I would point out that all structuralists share a limited set of à priori assumptions. They believe that all observable human behaviors may be accounted for in terms of knowable, ontologically real, but rarely directly observable, structures which are systemic, universal (at least to conspecifics), and generally operative at an unconscious level in the organism's cognitive apparatus.

As a first step towards specification of the idea of structure, we may say that it is a system of transformations. As we are talking about a system rather than a random collection of elements and properties, these transformations involve laws.

Any structure is maintained or elaborated through the interplay of its transformational laws. This interplay cannot yield results which are external to the system, and cannot, of course, employ elements which are external to it (Piaget 1971).

Structuralism

The notion of structure then involves the trinity of wholeness, transformation, and the idea of self-regulation.

Differences between various structuralist schools exist, not only with regard to theoretical grounding (as already mentioned) but also regarding temporal orientation and conceptualization of the locus of structure.

This having been acknowledged, we have little choice but to broaden our notions about the boundaries of our discipline and contrast briefly the two main strains of structuralism which attempt to deal with human cognition and its products. I speak here of semiotic structuralism which I have already described, and what is best termed evolutionary structuralism.

Semiotic and Evolutionary Structuralism

Typified by the work of Claude Lèvi-Strauss and his followers, semiotic structuralism is primarily non-biological in its empirical grounding, synchronic in temporal perspective, and neo-Platonic in its conception of the loci of structure.

In contrast, evolutionary structuralism grounds structure in biology, is diachronic in its temporal orientation and is cognitive or neurophysiological in its conception of the locus of structure. The works of Piaget (1971), Count (1973), and Teillard de Chardin (1956) clearly fall into this category.

Biogenetic Structuralism too may be considered to be within this latter camp. In fact, it is closest to the Piagetian school of "Genetic Epistemology" and employs many of his concepts such as assimilation, accommodation and equilibration.

Biogenetic Structuralists fully agree with Piaget (1970, 1971) that the process of structuring conceptual material in ontogenesis is universal, is genetically "programmed" and proceeds in a series of invariant global stages. In this regard this orientation also finds much in common with Kohlburg's moral judgment theory, and the conceptual systems theory of Harvey, Hunt, and Schroeder (1961 on conceptual systems and personality organization).

It differs however, with regard to the matter of content. Piaget states that the content of a structure is obtained from its environment and is therefore not genetically determined. He suggests that inasmuch as there is universal content structured by conspecific organisms' nervous systems, this is the result of universal attributes of their environment. We would argue on the other hand that much content is genetically programmed and further that this "wired-in" content is likely to be of the greatest interest to anthropologists. We refer to these wired-in models as "neurognostic models." This notion brings us to the central concept in biogenetic structural theory, that of neurognosis, and concomitantly to that of the "empirical modification cycle."

Neurognosis and the E.M.C.

A neurognostic model is a specific initial form in which reality is perceived by the organism. Such a model may be cognitive or cognitive/affective, is minimally isomorphic with that reality and forms the sub-strata (i.e. neural) upon which experience is organized and modelled. The inferred neurophysiological concomitant for a neurognostic model is a neurognostic structure. Such a structure is comprised of a pattern of action potentials in the central nervous system of the organism (akin to a "fixed action pattern" in ethology).

In concurrence with Hebb and Piaget, I recognize that such a model need not be localized in the brain but may be composed of an incredibly complex set of synaptic/dendritic relationships over wide cerebral areas.

I recognize too, that such models are not restricted to the central nervous system but (in Hebb's sense) reverberate through the so-called "autonomic" sub-strata as well (a notion envisioned by Reich, Rolf, and virtually all Yogic practitioners).

Biogenetic structuralists do not conceive of a neurognostic model as a static construction but rather as one which is innately dynamic, in dialogue with its environment.

The neurognostic model is restructured and elaborated in a process of feedback from the environment which has been termed the empirical modification cycle.

The brain generates a feed-forward loop, (the equivalent of Piaget's schema, or behaviour) based upon probability expectations as a function of an existing neurognostic model. By acting upon the environment, the model of reality from which the action was derived is validated. If the fit between schema or probability expectation and feedback are within acceptable limits the input data are released from memory. Should a mismatch occur, these data are used in the modification of the models. This process of model modification is one of physiological change in the dendritic/synaptic structure of the neural structures which constitute the physiological basis of the models through differential potentiation.

It is obvious then, that the biogenetic structuralists feel that any theory of human nature must recognize the nervous system as the organ of behaviour, and behaviour as the external concomitant of operations internal to the nervous system. Most of the work this far has been an attempt to model this interaction between the nervous system and its environment.

Cognized and Operational Environments

At this time I must introduce two more central concepts which regrettably add to the jargon.

The principle function of the human mind-brain is the modelling of the phenomenal world. I would agree with Schutz in contradistinction to Marleau-Ponty that a gnostic gap between environment and phenomenology is unavoidable. That is to say, one's cognitive model of reality is never fully isomorphic with that external or "ultimate" reality. This distinction between model and environment can be discussed with reference to Rappaport's notions of cognized and operational environments (1968).

The operational environment is the constellation of all stimuli which impinge upon the organism. This, as Rappaport suggests, is ideally the environment which the ethnographer attempts first to specify.

For all organisms with brains there exists a constellation of neuro-cognitive or in biogenetic structuralist terms neurognostic representations of the operational environment which Rappaport calls the cognized environment. As mentioned before, this constellation of neurognostic models is constructed in ontogenesis and subsystems are reformed continuously in adaptation though a dialogue with the environment which is termed the empirical modification cycle.

This as I have stated before is a feedback and feed-forward process by which cognized environment models are operationalized as schemata (after Piaget 1971), act upon the environment, and feedback from the operational environment responses is used to modify the models in the direction of increasing adaptive isomorphism.

The cognized environment of any individual or the composite cognized environment which culturally parameterizes a group consists then of all that is known about the operational environment. Thus the brain models events both internal and external to the organism - both babblng brooks and metabolic activities are part of the operational environment.

It is axiomatic of course that the individual's phenomenology never incorporates more than a fraction of his Ec - much Ec activity occurs outside of the organism's awareness.

Further, as Tart (1975) would be quick to point out, phenomenology will vary within and among individuals or groups of individuals over time. That is, the set of Ec attributes and subsystems incorporated in awareness will vary among individuals and over time within individuals.

A maxim of genetic epistemological theory is that the organism responds not to the operational environment, but rather to what is known about the Eo, that is to its cognized environment (Piaget 1971 - Biology and Knowledge).

The operational environment is virtually infinite in terms of the number of systems and complexity of relations within and among systems whereas the Ec is of course inevitably finite not only with regard to the range of data which it can use to model relations (e.g.the human eye senses a range of 400-700 NM, e.g. nitrogen fixing bacteria are salient but undetectable) but also, especially with respect to the complexity of relations and levels of systems organization it can model.

It is obvious also that the brain can model entities and relations which do not, or may not, exist in the Eo such as Gods, powers, social science constructs, and so on.

It is crucial to emphasize the distinction between structure and content with regards to Ec function. Content refers to the information pertaining to the Eo which is being processed by the brain. Structure refers to neurophysiological tissue which is organized to operate upon that information. Once information has entered the structure, the Ec is comprised of structure as well as content.

As I mentioned already, the Ec is never more than partially isomorphic with the Eo (adaptation is a function of efficient E.M.C. operation toward behaviour consistent with minimal isomorphism). Thus there exists for any organism a set of perceived effects for which there are no perceived causes. This set of effects is labelled the zone of uncertainty within the Ec with respect to the Eo. It is taken as axiomatic that the central nervous system will operate whenever possible to minimize the amount of ambiguity and uncertainty resulting from events in this area of cognition (see Piaget 1971). Thus it is suggested that it is the Zone of Uncertainty which is addressed by myth, science, and other "religious" cognitive activities.

Levels of Systemic Organization

Social scientists have recourse to a number of levels of systemic organization, or structure, in their attempts to explain social phenomena. Such foci for exploration include social structure, surface structure and deep structure, psychology, cognition, neuro-physiology, and so on.

Biogenetic Structuralism by definition, employs several of these levels, particularly those pertaining to brain function, behaviour, social action and ecology. If we are to escape the charge of reductionism it is necessary to establish some idea of the ontological-epistemological relationship among levels of systemic organization.

While we argue that there exists no epiphenomenal level of reality intervening between Homo Sapiens as a biological entity and this organism's environment we are not guilty of the naive physiological reductionism so prevalent in psychology a few years ago. Rather, we would suggest that "reductionism" and anti-reductionism are logically equivalent fallacies.

Social scientists are concerned with degrees of coordination among sub-systems, inter and intra-organismic and inter and intra-group. The choice to isolate and study a level of system such as neural structure, personalities, economics, ritual, or societies is an artifact of research design relative to the theoretical problem in question. The reification or positing into the real world of theoretical entities which result from the exclusion of a level of systemic organization which is implicated in or has relevance to theoretical problems is the fallacy Whitehead (1960:443) has termed "the bifurcation of nature."

Successful adaptation in human populations requires entrainment of a complex set of biological, psychological and sociocultural processes, in Rappaport's terms, "by which organisms, through responsive changes in their own states, structures or compositions maintain [homeostasis] in and among themselves in the face of both short-term environmental fluctuations and long-term changes in the composition or structure of their environments" (1971:60).

Biogenetic Structuralism asserts that the facility for such responses is embedded in man's neurobiological structure and is dependent upon the cognitive and symbolic functioning of his conceptual system being expressed overtly in terms of learned and shared behaviour in social groups.

I would suggest then, that specific culture content and behaviour patterns which characterize individual populations are surface level expressions of more complex and primordial structure in human organisms which can be identified in composite form as a biogram (Count 1973). In concert with this approach, the constellation of sets of beliefs, ideas, symbols, etc. which structure the Ec for particular populations, which some anthropologists call "culture" (e.g. Geertz 1957, 1966) is subsumed by the more useful notion of culture pool (Dunn 1970, Goodenough 1971).

We would argue that the diverse pool including the behaviors coordinated by it, is produced by the synthetic interaction of the neurophysiological and conceptual structures of individual organisms with events in their respective Operational Environments.

Individual organisms combine into groups for purposes of social action as a function of social and biological interdependencies. The E.M.C. dialogue with Eo events on an ecosystems level is mediated by the total adaptive infrastructure of the group.

The adaptive infrastructure could be defined as the total set of constraints imposed by group members collectively or individually upon the processing of energy and information necessary for the population's survival biologically, or as a corporate entity.

The three main subsystems of an organism's adaptive infrastructure may be identified for analytic purposes only as neurobiological, cognitive or phenomenological, and societal. These systems are organized on a common set of principles for synchronized responses to inputs from outside the organism or from other levels of system. This sort of structural synchronization is prerequisite for the successful functioning of the organism as a corporate entity.

Even a simple manual task requires entrainment of somatosensory, vestibular, cerebellar, and motor activity in the central nervous system. If performed in a social context, synchronization of perceptual, cognitive and affective capacities is further required. Where the stimulus requires a collective response from the group, this system must be capable of entraining the perceptual, cognitive, and affective components of an appropriate subset of group members.

At the level of societal organization of adaptive infrastructures, the pool of ideas, recipes, beliefs, and attitudes etc. must contain sufficient and efficient information and alternatives for synchronized responses to the complex stimuli constituted by environmental shifts. Failure to synchronize on this level threatens minimally, the survival of the group as a corporate body.

A USEFUL BIFURCATION OF NATURE

SURFACE STRUCTURE

behavioral expression of symbolic and meaningful information in culture pool, including economic, political, social, ideational content etc.

SOCIETAL INFRASTRUCTURE

mechanisms for the organization of individual cognitive infrastructures such as ritual, institutionalization etc.

COGNITIVE INFRASTRUCTURE

mechanisms for the processing of perceptual material

NEURAL INFRASTRUCTURE

central nervous system and peripheral nervous system, structure and function

(After Laughlin & d'Aquilly 1974)

The principles which link each subsystem or infra-structural level to the others are cybernetic and are organized in a complex feed-forward/feedback system throughout the organism. Data from the Eo may enter the system at any level and each subsystem must be cybernetically structured in a manner that allows for synchronized input from other subsystems as a link to environmental events or for direct input from the external environment.

Not all environmental events of course, require active entrainment of the entire adaptive infrastructure (e.g. a small change in body temperature may be hypothalamically mediated without the individual becoming conscious of either the event or his response to it). Events in the operational environment may elicit low-level perceptual responses which require mediation and synchronization of both neurophysiological and cognitive/affective subsystems but without precipitating awareness of observable response.

Finally, stimuli may be sufficiently salient and intense to require the entrainment of all three sub-systemic levels for synchronized response. Infra-structural subsystems then, must be organized and integrated in a hierarchy of overlapping cybernetic response principles.

Further, the activity range of these principles will be contingent upon the original subsystem or subsystems which input the data as well as upon the type and intensity of the information received by the system.

Homeorhesis and Equilibration

Thus far it may be difficult to distinguish biogenetic structuralism from a sophisticated environmental determinism involving an essentially homeostatic model of man and society. Such a notion, reminiscent of the classical and neo-diffusionists, would fail to include man as an active agent in his own development. Further such a view of cognitive morphology is essentially contra-empirical (Piaget 1971).

As I stated earlier, this approach is close to that of Piaget who has demonstrated clearly the active nature of human learning. It is only through acting upon the operational environment that it is possible to test our cognized environment and modify it. Karl Pribram has also stressed man's active role in creating his own cognitive morphology.

The brain, or a given subsystem, acts to select the aspects of the stimulus array (which is the Eo) which are relevant to it according to genetically based and also acquired biases. Clearly, our basic faculties and mechanisms for the inputting and processing of information place limitations upon the type and intensity of stimuli we are able to detect.

Similarly at a much higher level of systemic organization, our mental models preclude our considering data which may or may not be adaptively relevant.

An example of the former case would be our total inability to perceive consciously those parts of the electromagnetic spectrum which fall below 400 NM or above 700 NM in wavelength or those auditory signals which are below 30 or above 18,000 CPS. An example of the latter would be the inability of the anthropologist whose composite model of "a culture" has cancelled out the intra-group variance in cognitive mapping, to detect and model the ongoing process of gradual "culture change" in the system.

By cancelling out code diversity through the construction of a modal model the researcher precludes his own perception of the sequences of small changes which produce larger ones - in Sir Cyril Burt's terms "continually requiring of (culture) a one word answer to the query whether or not it has stopped beating its wife yet."

The brain actively influences the amount and kind of information which reaches it, primarily as a function of cortical inhibition. At the level of sensory information the process is well documented. There exist in all sensory pathways, a number of potentiometric sub-circuits (the volume control knob on a radio operates a potentiometer or variable resister) which act individually to inhibit and corporately to filter information. The potentiation or adjustment of these mechanisms is "set" by higher subsystems in the brain such as the reticular formation, which organizes a number of such subsystems and which in turn are adjusted by input from higher (e.g. cortical) and lower (e.g. hypothalamic) structures.

Karl Pribram suggests that the areas of so-called "uncommitted cortex," or associational cortex, function to set filters, thus structuring the brain's input.

I am not going to deal extensively with the physiological basis of conceptual systems in the present work. A brief summary will be necessary because the study of phenomena mediated by the various levels of a system requires an understanding of the operation of all levels of organization efficiently present.

I have introduced the ideas of Operational and Cognized Environments. I observed that the operational environment is the set of all contingencies which impinge on the organism. The cognized environment is the model which the mind-brain develops as a reflection of its interaction with the operational environment.

Secondly, I discussed the idea that there exists no epiphenomenal level of reality between H. Sapiens as a biological entity and that organism's environment. I pointed out that reductionism and anti-reductionism are logically equivalent fallacies.

Thirdly, I introduced the concepts of homeorhesis and equilibration, explaining that I use the latter term in the same sense as does Piaget to indicate the process whereby the mind-brain sets degrees of receptivity at multiple levels within an information-processing sequence such that within limits, perceptions are rendered isomorphic with the Ec. The counterpart to this concept is that of "accommodation" which will be discussed later.

Now I shall continue to define the concepts of homeorhesis and equilibration.

While, much of what I am presenting can be validated in terms of the physiological and neurophysiological literature, it is not primarily this level of analysis which is the focus of the present work. A brief summary is however, necessary because as I have asserted repeatedly, phenomena must be studied in terms of multiple levels of analysis. The level of neural structure and function underlies and serves as ontogenetically valid allegory for other levels of structure within cognitive, and ultimately societal, infrastructure.

Borrowing from Miller, Galanter, and Pribram the concept of "plan," it is possible to demonstrate the existence within the human mind/brain of a hierarchy of models for perception and action. These range from completely "wired-in" plans of the order of telephone exchange or S-O-R (Stimulus->Organism->Response paradigm) function which exist at low levels of systemic organization such as the hypothalamus (see Thorpe 1956:108-111) to increasingly complex and permeable models at the levels for example, of the basal nuclei (what Pribram would call the "brain within a brain") and the cerebral hemispheres with their covering of cortex.

While "plans" (schemata, neurognostic models) may be modified to some extent at less complex levels of the structural organization of the brain, the characteristics of flexibility (ie.permeability) and generalizability are most clearly evident in cortical models. It is chiefly the ability to modify mental models (plans, schemata, or in other words, the Ec, i.e. to learn) which both Piaget and Pribram see as criteria for phylogenetic and ontogenetic evolution.

As Pribram suggests, the cortex is the mechanism (i.e. level of systemic organization) where most new organization occurs, and new information is generated. That is, the critical set of constraints upon the processing of energy (anterior "motor" cortex,) and information (posterior "perceptual" cortex) would appear to be elaborated or modified primarily though cortical structures.

This process of change constitutes, or minimally, parallels, what we call "thinking," and is not limited to human or even hominid brains. The difference between the neuro-cognitive systems of higher mammals and that of man is one of complexity (Thorpe 1965).

From the work of Kohler (1957), Thorpe (1965), and Piaget (1971) it is apparent that this thinking process depends upon the ability of the neuro-cognitive system to maintain what Piaget has called "object constancy" (Piaget 1971). This, in a nutshell, is the capacity to hold a mental image of something which is not physically present in the organism's operational environment.

Both Thorpe and Piaget have emphasized the importance of the ability to keep something in mind when it is not physically present. This capacity is necessary in order to construct a conscious mental image of the operational environment.

> "I imagine that the animal's recognition of the continuance of an external world developed.....pari passu with the ability to solve new problems by conscious insight.....as soon as the animal was in a position to produce a new solution to an unfamiliar problem, without trial and error behaviour but by a process of making a mental comparison and selection between possible alternatives based upon the relations which had been perceived - as soon as it could do this it could begin to see the existence and coherence of a real world. So I think that in animals as in men the appreciation of reality as distinct from the rest of experience, must be through its coherence and lawfulness."
>
> (Thorpe 1965:105)

It is clear that higher apes use much the same sorts of mental problem-solving operations as do men. The difference seems to be in the degree to which H. Sapiens "interiorizes" the problem-solving process. The phylogenetically lower organism will use a higher proportion of exterior or observable trial and error behaviour while man is able to perform more operations mentally. This is a difference in complexity only - man is able to hold more images simultaneously. This capacity diminishes at lower levels in phylogeny and ontogeny.

If culture is seen as a mental map (i.e. constellation of images and their relations - the former mediated by the posterior, associational cortex while the latter are mediated by the anterior "motor" cortex) then the capacity for culture is not limited to man and will vary between individuals, and quite possibly between groups, as a function of cognitive complexity or of the ~~level~~ of individuals' cognitive systemic organization which is entrained (i.e. synchronized, operationalized) by the group.

As Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) suggest, "culture systems may on the one hand be considered as products of action and on the other as conditioning elements of further action." The former conceptualization of culture is akin to that of Hoebel (1972), while the latter, and most important for the study of change, is close to Wallace (1970) and Goodenough (1961, 1963).

The model I am suggesting here is based upon the idea of culture as the "organization of diversity" (Wallace 1970) rather than the "replication of uniformity" model implied by Hoebel (1972).

This latter view restricts itself to the analysis of a highly artificial construct with existence of a purely statistical nature. Proponents of this plasticized concept of culture blur the distinction between patterns of behaviour and patterns for behaviour (Goodenough 1961,'63).

As Goodenough suggests, culture has ontological reality solely as a mental construct - a cognitive map which exists in the mind/brain of individual human beings.

Some aspects of this cognitive model are idiosyncratic, some are shared with some members of the group, some are shared with most members of the group (Goodenough's "private," "operational" and "public" levels of systemic organization within society).

I would hasten to add that the briefest study of brain physiology and its relationship to perception and behaviour will force us to elaborate Goodenough's model to suggest that some models (i.e. "images, plans" after Miller et al) will be shared with virtually all members of the group, and some with virtually all conspecifics.

Culture then, is shared, but not completely. Those aspects of the individual's Ec which are shared with others give rise to the "behaviour patterns characteristic of the group" which Hoebel (1972) defines as culture but produce, instead of a single homogeneous system, a series of (analytically but not functionally separable) concentrically organized levels of systemic synchronization radiating out from the individual. While it is possible for analytic purposes only to isolate a level of systemic organization within an individual or society, it must be recognized that we are dealing with a whole system, and that no subsystem is functionally independent.

An adequate model must take a "whole systems" approach to the study of man and consciousness. It is axiomatic for the study of whole systems that changes or input at one level of systemic organization have ramifications, predictable to the extent that transformational laws can be specified, throughout all levels.

We must begin to model ritual-initiation, and man and society in general, in such a manner as to be able to incorporate data relevant to all efficiently present levels of systemic organization. Specifically we must be able to talk about ritual-initiation at the level of the human nervous system, human phenomenology, and social action. Thus I recognize that input at any level in the system entrains to one degree or another all sub-systems.

More broadly however, we must take into account that the human mind and the cultures which represent shared content and structure of mind are but analytically separated aspects of whole systems.

We do not study the consciousness of man in a context. The consciousness of man is the context. The active process of forming consciousness, along with the physical and social environments together set the stage for a "theater of mind" within which and contingent upon which the structure and content of conscious experience arises.

THE SENSORIUM AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROBOT

In discussing the contingencies for the portrayal of models of reality in awareness by the mind/brain I shall make use of the concept of "sensorium." This concept denotes the set of processes which are antecedent to our experience.

The "sensorium" includes experience and the neurognostic structures which mediate experience. It is a concept which includes both structure and content. With a long history of use in medicine and psychiatry, sensorium integrates experience, neural structure, and behaviour.

We can begin to model consciousness as a sort of theater of the mind wherein the contingencies of what is projected upon our phenomenological screen, our awareness, is mediated by the sensorium.

The sensorium constitutes the set of contingencies which determines the range of experiences which the organism is capable of having and also the contingencies whereby those experiences are produced in the awareness of the organism. Thus for each species there exist different sensorium configurations, and within species the contingencies for the entrainment in awareness of sensorium representations of exigencies internal and external to the being will vary as a function of individual experience, and in humans as a function of cultural conditioning.

The sensorium acts to entrain neurognostic subsystems in awareness on the basis of perceived need, which may be defined as the degree of isomorphism between feed-forward and feedback processes, i.e. where the model yields results which accord with neurognostic expectations, awareness will not be entrained; where the feedback from the Eo does not accord with existing neurognostic structures, that is to say, where feedback from the environment is perceived as novel, awareness will be entrained.

It can be argued that an evolutionary prerequisite selects for the ability of the organism to learn new behaviors, new neurognostic models, and then assigns them to relatively automatic entrainment below the level of awareness.

As Gregory Bateson (1972) suggests, no organism can afford to be conscious of information or processes which can be handled automatically. The processing of information with awareness entrained is painfully slow.

If any organism had to cognize, to be aware of the full range of information which is processed within the sensorium, the time frame within which it would be operating would be dramatically expanded relative to organisms which did not have such complete "awareness."

One function of the sensorium is to monitor E.M.C. contingencies such that when novel situations are encountered which cannot be handled below awareness, the appropriate subsystems may be entrained in the being's awareness. This function is usually discussed in the literature as the "attention mechanism."

Awareness seems to have adaptive significance as a device for inputting new neurognostic models, and for addressing inadequacies in established models.

When the organism is presented with novel situations, the sensorium's responses to the novel aspects of the situation are entrained in awareness. An experiential model pertaining to the relevant situation is constructed within the sensorium and projected in awareness.

During the initial phases of learning, a great deal of sensory material is entrained in awareness. We are cognizant of each subtle relevant aspect of the task. Each sensory input and kinesthetic output is monitored in awareness. We haltingly place a finger just so:

-Then we apply pressure.
-We place another finger down and to the left, and adjust the first finger such that our hand is comfortable.
-Then we move the third finger in to position,
-depress the string,
-check that the other fingers are still maintaining appropriate pressure.
-A forth finger is moved in to position, occasioning minor adjustments in each of the other three.
-Finally the hand is adjusted for comfort and appropriate depression of all strings.
-The wrist is swivelled painfully in a counter clockwise direction as the right elbow and wrist of the other hand manipulates the instrument.
-A visual and kinesthetic check established whether or not the appropriate strings are being depressed.
-The thumb and two fingers of the right hand are adjusted such that the pick is firmly held at a right-angle to the sounding board.
-Then the right hand is moved down such that it is one inch from the third string.
-A downward movement brings the pic in contact with the string.
-The pick is withdrawn and adjusted such that the next trajectory will bring it into contact with the fifth string.
-Again a sharp downward movement and withdrawal.
-The fingers are adjusted to re-position the pick which has slipped slightly and again it is launched, this time toward the forth string.
-Again the pick is withdrawn and positioned to hit the sixth string this time.
-Then the pick is positioned to strike the third string again
-the above steps are repeated.

The above description is in fact, very much truncated. The novice musician is visually, kinesthetically and auditorially testing the adequacy of his or her movements at all stages. As the appropriate neurognostic models are built up, the individual will be aware of fewer and fewer sensorium data which enable him to play a chord on the guitar with a simple rocking picking style.

Once the neurognostic model is sufficiently refined to be able to handle the task automatically, awareness is dis-entrained as a function of habituation. But the sensorium is still processing all of the information which previously had to be entrained in awareness.

The individual may moreover, at a later date, be quite unable to understand why a novice should have so much difficulty performing such a simple task.

The reader can no doubt furnish countless examples from personal experience whereby the learning of novel tasks, or the presentation of new experiences, required entrainment or relevant aspects of the sensorium in awareness. No doubt, with experience (i.e. as a function of habituation) less and less entrainment in awareness was required. One simply drives the car, skis down a hill, plays a complex chain of chords and picking styles, or walks across a room.

The experience of learning this last task is more difficult to recall for most adults. Yet at each stage in our development we must first pay full attention to all novel aspects of new patterns of stimuli and new tasks. At each stage in ontogeny there are specific tasks which the sensorium is "prepared" (see Seligman and Hager 1972) to deal with. At each stage in the development of the consciousness of the being, certain aspects of the sensorium, of the potential consciousness of the being are entrained in awareness.

At each stage in ontogeny vast numbers of neurognostic models are formed and as a function of habituation, are dis-entrained from awareness. Vast tracts of human experience are dis-entrained from awareness, and become automatic, unless something goes wrong.

When the guitarist continually makes a mistake he suddenly becomes conscious of the process whereby a chord is built up. Unfortunately he will find that it is extremely difficult to re-entrain the process whereby the chord is formed in awareness, so automatic has the process become. More subtle "bad habits" are even more difficult to cognize. Few skiers manage to "unlearn" habits which have come to operate on a reflex level.

Existing neurognostic models form the initial foundation upon which new ones are built. We initially approach skiing with the models which are appropriate for walking. Via the E.M.C. new sub-sets are built up which are increasingly isomorphic with environmental feedback. But each level of model and the E.M.C. which modifies it is operant within the context of other related models. A system of models is cybernetically structured to permit the E.M.C. to operate at all levels of systemic organization.

It is of course the case that single subsystems are cybernetically linked to other subsystems and to the larger whole systems of which they are a part.

We often hear of high level musicians, athletes and others that, having reached a certain level of competence, they "had to start all over, to re-learn everything." As any organism learns a task, each sensorium component of the task is entrained in awareness, refined, and gradually dis-entrained from awareness as, to use a computer metaphor, a "sub-routine." When the organism acts, that sub-routine is "called" and runs "transparent to the user (awareness)" as part of a larger task, which comprises a number of such sub-routines.

In turn, these larger routines, the equivalent of Seligman and Hagers' (1972) "plans and images" become components of higher-order routines and are also dis-entrained from awareness. Most of our cognitive patterns for action, whether for making music, walking, etc. consist in complex concatenations of nested cognitive models which have, one by one, been dis-entrained from awareness.

We have built a robot!

"It" can move about without much interference from us, can play a G minor, and can ski a slalom course with only very high level input from "us".

The sensorium dis-entrains parts of "us" from awareness as a function of habituation, but the "robot" is still tracking that aspect of our being. Some tantric practitioners would suggest that realizing or coming to terms with the nature of being may involve a conscious dialogue with that robot.

The reader will remember that I referred to the routines which are entrained in awareness and eventually dis-entrained to become sub-routines (of more complex routines which in turn are dis-entrained and become sub-routines and so on) as the equivalent of Pribram's concepts "Plans" and "Images."

Note that the examples I have used so far have been mainly "plans" or "schema." I have already argued that perception, the manner in which we form images of the world, is also an active process. The experience we have of "external reality" consists in sets of models constructed and projected "internally" by mind/brain via the sensorium.

Thus the "robot" not only performs complex whole acts with minimal or no activity in our awareness, it also creates complex sensory images in our awareness. It not only can play a G minor chord, it also presents us with the perception of music as sequences of related sounds, which are associated with a range of other experiences. We see objects, rather than constellations of sensory impressions and persons rather than sets of probability statements regarding patterns of behaviour.

The main function of the sensorium is the constructing in awareness of a model of the world which is desired by some part of the being. It should be noted that the sensorium has the potential to display any experience which can be known by the being on his "phenomenological screen" without the necessity of "external" stimulation.

All ordinary human experience consists in sensorium subroutines which are concatenated and displayed on what John Shearer (personal communication 1980) has called "the phenomenological screen." Thus it is not only routines for acting upon our environment which become "user-transparent" programs, but also the models which synthesize sensory data, and link it to existing images operate largely outside of awareness.

Ordinarily we are not able to cognize what John Lilly (1974) would call the "programs and meta-programs in the human biocomputer" which produce the image of "reality" which is our awareness. Most of us are limited to viewing the screen in the theater of mind.

It is noteworthy that the Sanskrit word "Yoga" originally had the connotation of "yoking" of harnessing in awareness the "programs" which normally are antecedent to awareness.

The foregoing implies that human cognitive development consists in sequences of entrainment in awareness of aspects of our being, followed by habituation as a function of adaptive interface with environmental exigencies and subsequent dis-entrainment of the experiential concomitant of the relevant neurognostic models.

The Piagetian work indicates that the "self", the Ec, is built up rather like the layers of an onion each contingent upon the last. New information is integrated in the Ec as a function of existing models for perception and action. Relatively simple models are integrated within relatively larger models which themselves are entrained in still more complex levels of systemic organization.

Based upon the foregoing ideas several suppositions seem to be supportable:

1/ Each level of cognitive development, i.e. each level of systemic complexity demonstrates several emergent properties as a function of systemic complexity. These include sets of experiential parameters which constitute new orders of content and structure. Experientially each level of cognitive evolution is represented in awareness in terms of patterns of experience which are unique to that level of systemic complexity. That is to say, at each level of cognitive development the sensorium constructs in awareness a reality presented in the phenomenological language specific to that ontogenetic stage.

2/ Sets of lower level models for action (e.g. Pribram's Plans) are entrained by higher ones which entrain other lower levels and are in turn entrained by still higher level models. Generally such lower level models are entrained automatically and are not entrained in awareness.

It is possible to entrain some lower level models for action in awareness by addressing them in terms of their component elements or sub-routines. Some such models may be restructured - for example one's golf-stroke may be corrected. However a model must be addressed in terms of its component elements -the meta-program for "playing music" cannot address the sub-routine for "placing the index finger in a certain position twisting it to allow other fingers to be positioned, and exerting enough pressure to enable the string to be played". You have to take the music routine apart and then take the chord level routine apart to be able to modify the finger-positioning routine.

3/ A corollary of the above, - sets of lower order models for the representation of reality in awareness entrain higher levels which in turn entrain higher levels. The imaging routines which form the building blocks for the reality we experience are hierarchically organized as developmental sequences.

It is possible to entrain some lower level models for experience in awareness by addressing them in terms of their component elements. For example, we may learn to cognize "small behaviour" which entrains models for the perception of social situations. A perceptual model must however, be addressed in terms of the level of elements and structure which comprise it. It is evident for example that one cannot effectively address a phobia based on childhood experience through recourse to the cognitive language, the imaging strategy of the adult.

It seems likely that different orders of "images" or imaging sub-routines must be entrained with recourse to the level of cognitive language which characterizes them. Thus we can probably categorize levels of symbol systems in terms of their function in entraining different levels of neurognostic models.

Further, it seems likely that entrainment of these lower order neurognostic models in awareness will involve a different order of experience than that which characterizes normal waking state "reality". This experience of "alternate reality" is largely a function of the projection in awareness of information coded in terms of different orders of symbolizing function.

The mind/brain seems to be able to set itself to function in diverse modes of consciousness such that distinct configurations of related neurognostic models are entrained in awareness.

Such entrainment seems to be in part a function of the level of symbolic system, or "language" which is used.

The mind/brain then would seem to be capable of entraining in awareness a broad range sets of neurognostic models, which are experienced as discrete modes of consciousness as a function of shifts in the symbolizing functions used to entrain them in awareness.

I shall now examine the above propositions with reference to the Genetic Epistemology of Jean Piaget.

Creative Imaging and Piaget's Model

Perhaps our most comprehensive and well-researched models for the development of human consciousness have been produced within the Piagetian school. Piaget has demonstrated that in ontogeny the human organism passes through a hierarchically organized set of global stages in the organization of consciousness.

Piaget has been careful to point out that myriad sub-stages may be abstracted, but argues for the following global stages as "plateaus" in cognitive evolution which are characterized by relatively distinct modes of processing information, ie distinct modes of awareness.

mode of awareness	approx. age
sensori-motor	0-2
Pre-operational	2-7
Concrete operational	7-11
Formal operational	11- (Piaget's highest stage)

This model is also validated by the work of Kohlberg with moral judgment (Kohlberg & Gilligan 1971).

It is important to recognize that the neurognostic meta-structures which characterize each level of neuro-cognitive development are incorporated into the next stage, and not lost. Rather, they are entrained within higher level meta-structures. The potential exists for the organism to entrain these antecedent levels of cognitive process. If for example, the organism is highly stressed, this has a de-layering effect (Sargant 1970) The organism's behaviour and awareness revert to that which characterizes lower antecedent levels of systemic organization. Stress can penetrate through the layers of cognitive systems.

If consciousness consists in a set of nested interacting "realities," Sargant's work (based on that of Pavlov) implies that it is possible to peel consciousness like an onion such that antecedent lower-order realities can become entrained in the awareness of the being.

I suggested earlier that the entrainment in awareness of the modes of cognitive function other than normal waking state awareness is experienced in terms of levels of symbolic thought specific to those cognitive modalities. That is to say, each state of mind/brain function has a concurrent representation in awareness as a discrete state characterized by unique sets of symbolic elements and structure.

I would also propose a corollary hypothesis to the effect that the conscious introduction in the sensorium of symbolic arrays organized to address specific modes of cognitive function, or states of awareness, may act to entrain in awareness the experiential concomitant of specific modes of mind/brain function. The continual presentation of a specific symbolic array may serve to entrain a specific set of neurognostic models in awareness. In this sense then, symbolic material may act as "keys" to states of consciousness, to modes of mind/brain function which are ordinarily dis-entrained from awareness. It is possible also that symbolic material may act to entrain in awareness unique combinations of neurognostic models which may be experienced as novel modes of consciousness, "other realities."

John McManus (1984) has suggested that specific types of symbolic language function to activate transductive symbolic thought which accesses specific levels of consciousness in the being. His chart is presented below.

mode of awareness	age	level of symbolism
Sensori-motor	0-2	Rituals and other strategies for tuning neural function.
Pre-operational	2-7	Imagery
Concrete operational	7-11	Philosophy
Formal operational	11-	Cosmology

Specifically, McManus has argued that many aspects of the being's cognized experience are contingent upon neurognostic models which can only be addressed through transductive symbolic media. He suggests that creative fantasy (Jung 1944, 1952, 1956, 1966, for example) addresses levels of consciousness which are ordinarily not entrained in awareness, in terms of symbol systems designed to activate transductive symbolic thought.

The possibility arises that alternate phases of consciousness as experienced by our informants may consist in multiple neuro-cognitive structures which are bridged and activated in awareness through the use of symbolic material. A further corollary might be the activation of sets of neuro-cognitive structures such that higher levels of synthesis may be affected as a stable characteristic of the consciousness of the being. That is to say, the symbolic strategy whereby neurocognitive substructures or aspects of consciousness are entrained in awareness may be facilitative of cognitive integration in the individual, a process which Jung has called "individuation."

Toward an Anthropology of Consciousness

I have suggested that it is the "zone of uncertainty" in the interface between the operational and cognized environments (Eo/Ec)which is addressed by ritual. This is an idea which is hardly new in anthropological theory.

However, where most theorists have tended to assume that these uncertainties are resolved at the level of surface structure I would argue that at least in the case of the genuine adept within some tantric religious systems, the ritual "answers" may represent surface level encodings (i.e. metaphors) regarding information designed to facilitate major changes in the individual Cognized Environment.

I remind the reader that the concept of Cognized Environment subsumes both the realm of experience, and its unconscious antecedents, i.e. consciousness, not merely awareness. So the restructuring of the ritual practitioner's Ec consists in altering the basis for his experience of "reality" in ways which are more far-reaching than simply altering surface level experience.

It is not surprising that such a view is not widespread in anthropology. We have tended to be interested in social processes and so have quite legitimately studied religion as it relates to the larger social systems of which it is at some level in its organization, a part.

Further, the number of adepts, i.e. individuals who have operationalized religious epistemologies fully within themselves forms a very small and often socially inactive or neutral social component. Such individuals tend to play a minimal role in day to day social interaction. In fact they often withdraw altogether from ordinary society, or even from any human society at all.

Such individuals do of course play a part in day to day interaction in that they form a cultural presence in the same way that a deity or spirit does. Such an entity, whether or not it is physically present, and whether or not it "actually" exists, affects people's conduct . It is sufficient that it is cognized. However, this sort of referred social interaction is not what concerns us here.

I am concerned with the Cognized Realities of the adepts themselves, with the efficacy or lack of efficacy of their practices, and with the result of those practices.

The anthropology of religion then, has largely been the study of the religion of the common man, of the non-adept. The adept figures in these formulations to the extent that he, or his existence, or ideas regarding his nature, have social impact. These aspects of the adept seldom relate directly to the terms of reference which form the basis of his cognition and action.

Such an approach is useful and necessary for the study of society. It is, by itself, inappropriate for the study of religion.

Anthropology is the study of the nature of man. It represents the frequently faltering but nonetheless valiant attempt to develop an epistemology of humaness. It is also partly a biological science. We study our place in nature and our own physical and psychophysical evolution, historically and in ontogeny. In addition to being a biological science it is also considered to be a social and behavioral science.

Anthropology is unique in that it attempts to synthesize a broad range of human experience. While the sociologist studies how people live together in groups, and psychologists model how they think, feel, and learn, and historians trace and analyze the course of past events, the anthropologist attempts to deal with all of these areas through modelling the wholeness of human experience.

Naturally such an ambitious enterprise encounters difficulties as we use the only registering instrument we have (our Ec, or rather that part of the Ec which we are able to cognize) to investigate and model other equally sophisticated conceptual/perceptual and cognitive systems which are presumably quite different from our own.

At the worst, the anthropological investigator reduces the richness and depth of other human beings' cultural lives, phenomenology and ways of understanding to the drab conventions of his academe. He produces feeble cariacatures of his informants - straw men.

At best he transcends the narrow confines of his own conditioned ways of knowing and explores a greater range of human understanding than that with which his culture equipped him. He marks an epistemological path whereby he and others may understand more fully what it is to be a human being.

Meditation Technology

I am interested in the study of ritual and ritual initiation within its own stated terms of reference, in terms of its stated purpose, which is the transformation of man's understanding. One must look then, at the transformation strategies and technology - the software used in programming and meta-programming the human biocomputer. To do this it seems reasonable to consult with and observe beings who have successfully used these tools.

Such a study of meditational technology has, as an à priori assumption, the notion that the human nervous system is capable of setting itself to function in such a way that an individual can experience an entirely new state of awareness as different from ordinary experience as the normal waking state is from deep sleep. A corollary hypothesis argues that altered states of awareness may act to entrain other subsystems which affect or comprise the entirety of consciousness of the being such that repeated and prolonged alternate-state experience may engender the reforming of the consciousness which subsumes and is antecedent to awareness.

Before we begin to talk about "altered states of awareness" and their role in the evolution of consciousness in ontogeny, we must establish that [a] such states may be experienced by a significant proportion of humanity and [b] they are not mere artifacts but are active elements/processes in the morphology of cognitive systems.

I shall begin to do this in terms of the macro-language of human neuroscience, primarily because such an approach, dealing as it does with so-called objective data, is consistent with the narrowest conventions of western epistemology.

I must point out at this stage that my informants, echoing Ricoeur, would suggest, instead, that we allow the system to "think through us," as it was designed to do. Thereby, they inform us, we would expand our faculties through the acquisition of a meta-language rather than losing information through the development and use of a macro-language.

It is axiomatic that for every state of mind there is a corresponding physical state of the human nervous system. When the mind is in a particular mode of function the body and nervous system are set to a corresponding style of function.

It was thought at one time that the brain acted as the organ of the mind, functioning as a whole during all conscious states. Such a point of view is no longer tenable as the result of recent research (e.g. Anand et al 1969, Kasamatsu 1969, Kamiya 1969, Tart 1975, Laughlin et al 1984); we are differently conscious from moment to moment. This is primarily a dual function of (a) the object of consciousness, (b) perceptual set. This process is mediated by (c) state of arousal. Concomitant with each shift in awareness or consciousness is a differing pattern of neuron activation.

Various "clusters" of neural functions operate within relatively fixed ranges, apparently as a function of the organism's discrete state of consciousness. Such a state is defined in terms of a natural profile of operating ranges.

With a shift from one discrete state of consciousness to another (e.g. normal waking state -> sleep -> dream -> meditation derived states) a discrete set of physiological correlates arises. Each shift in consciousness is accompanied by a shift in biological electro-chemical function. If these are monitored, perhaps through metabolic correlates, biochemical markers, Electrocardiographic, Electroencephalographic, Galvanic Skin Response or other autonomic concomitants, an observer can accurately profile the range of activity on various parameters which, taken together, form a pattern of ranges of values which may be shown to co-occur and, with concomitant phenomenology, are diagnostic of discrete phases of consciousness.

I use the term "phase of consciousness" here, and throughout this work, to mean a relatively stable state (or more accurately, process) such as that we usually refer to as the normal waking state, or the various stages of sleep, certain drug-induced, trance, or meditative states. To qualify as a discrete phase of consciousness, a mind-state must demonstrate unique constellations of behavioral and phenomenological characteristics which form an identifiable and discrete pattern.

Ideally such a pattern would include both "internal," and "external" co-varying parameters such that both phenomenological and external observables may be included in protocols to identify that phase. Such a strategy would be subject, of course, to the same sorts of difficulties encountered in any diagnostic enterprise. In addition we must not be unwilling to look at phases of consciousness for which physiological parameters have not yet been established, or which are experienced by relatively few individuals (e.g. mystic adepts).

It would be easy to fall into the trap of allowing our measurement strategy to parameterize the data. For example, the typical electroencephalographic measurement divides the brain's electromagnetic spectrum into four "bands." It is entirely possible that unique patterns of electrophysiological activity may be measurable only as statistical "interactions" among the four levels of measurement. Such a phase of activity may not be apparent without the use of sophisticated analytical tools such as Fourier Transform analysis whereby synchronous variation across bands may be detected as discrete patterns.

Attempts have been made to devise a strategy whereby phenomenological data from non-waking phases of consciousness may be made accessible to waking-state analysis (Laughlin 1977, Bertini et al 1972, Tart 1975:156-162. This enterprise, broadly labelled the "phenomenological typewriter" (Laughlin 1977) involves laboratory hardware, experimental design, and phenomenological strategies.

A sensitive membrane-keyboard may be held in the hand of a meditating researcher, and used to indicate his phenomenological phase without intruding upon it (since normal verbalization requires re-entry into the waking state). Some researchers have found that it is possible to learn to carry the typewriter phenomenologically through specialized observational strategies.

It has been clearly demonstrated that the brain requires periodic phase-shifts in order to continue to operate efficiently (Shearer et al 1977). Most obviously, we have the requirement to enter the various discrete states which are collectively referred to as sleep. It is interesting that the single label usually applied to these phenomena leads us to think of the sleep states as if only one mind state were involved. In fact we know from numerous sleep-lab studies that at least four major states of brain activity occur during sleep. My Tibetan informants who have been studying the phenomenology of sleep for millennia inform me that there are a number of different dream-realities among which there occurs a rhythmic oscillation not unlike that observed in brain electrical activity by western dream researchers using electroencephalographic indicators. Two lamas on different occasions suggested that if western scientists of mind would train themselves to observe the workings of their own minds they would be able to access this data with ease and would not need their electronic apparatus.

One lama with whom I was able to continue the discussion of this topic agreed with me that while neither domain of investigation was ultimately more "real" than the other, it was reasonable to explore the range of domains in which a particular phenomenon might obtain. He suggested however, that "direct" observation of one's experience was more likely to lead one to enlightenment than would the analysis of limited concomitants of other peoples' experiences.

Although no physiological requirement for sleep has been demonstrated, the necessity for sleep may lie in the fact that during this activity at least four discrete phases of consciousness occur. Each phase of consciousness demonstrates different sets of phenomenological elements and relationships among those elements, in other words, a different "reality." Perhaps it is necessary for man to re-integrate awareness and the consciousness of which it is a subsystem periodically through recourse to experiential lexicons (or meta-languages) which subsume but are not limited to the parameters of the normal waking state.

The physiological and biochemical correlates of phases of consciousness have only been made amenable to scientific study in the last fifty years (R.K. Wallace 1966). It is not surprising then, that sophisticated techniques for identifying phases of consciousness which are not transparent to the "normal waking" phase, that is, which have no obvious carry-over of experience to that phase, are only beginning to be developed. These techniques, such as the application of Fourier Transform analysis to Electroencephalographic data mentioned earlier, are tending to both validate phenomenologically derived data regarding the existence of alternate phases of consciousness provided by meditation experts, and may also serve to guide explorers to phases not yet phenomenologically identified. Minimally it is possible to use "external" correlates to guide novice researchers in identifying phases for which the phenomenological markers are subtle, or which are not easily identified as a constellations of experiences which form a particular dynamic pattern.

Such a strategy is by no means new. My Tibetan informants have a literature and oral tradition dealing with unobtrusive psychometrics designed to aid the less observant teacher in ascertaining the mind-state of his student. The strategy involves learning to pay attention to subtle behavioral cues usually referred to by anthropologists as "small behaviour." Some of the sorts of behavioral variables observed are similar to those which practitioners of Neurolinguistic Programming are trained to use (Bandler and Grinder 1975).

At present the phenomenological explorers are in the lead with regard to identification of operating modes of the mind. The physical laboratory is being used primarily to establish physical parameters which seem to be diagnostic of particular mind-states. For example, at Howard Medical School, W.R.K. Wallace demonstrated that one simple form of meditation practice produced a state of consciousness, identifiable in terms of physiological correlates, which appeared to be discrete and distinct from other states such as wakefulness, the sleep stages, ~~and~~ from other altered states produced by hypnosis, drugs, etc. Wallace suggests that this constitutes a "fourth major state of consciousness" which may be as important as waking and sleep states.

A number of other studies have measured long-term change in correlates of consciousness as a function of regular entry into this "fourth state." Such long-term changes appear to become stable attributes of the practitioner's consciousness and may fairly be termed adaptive in that individually and collectively they act to render more efficient the individual's interaction with his environment. For example, increased autonomic stability is directly related to an increase in cognitive flexibility and therefore creativity and intelligence (however measured). It has been shown that meditators demonstrate faster habituation, faster reaction times, and generally appear to be able to function in complex situations more efficiently than non-meditators.

"Real life" indicators have also been studied. Meditators use less tobacco, and decrease recreational drug intake. They also tend to improve academic standing, decrease anti-social behaviour, have a lower divorce rate, and so on. Various forms of meditation have been suggested as the only viable treatment for alcoholism. Meditation has been shown to be effective in the treatment of social (e.g. criminal recidivism) as well as physical or more accurately, psychophysical maladies from asthma to high blood pressure.

Perhaps the nervous system needs to produce these other phases of consciousness in a less obvious but similar manner to its need for the sleep stages. It is a matter for serious speculation whether such states might not occur more frequently and spontaneously in a natural environment.

Incidentally, it might be useful at this point to discuss the differences between biofeedback training, as currently practiced, and as an an exclusive technique to achieve a desired phase of consciousness, and traditional meditation practices.

To start with, meditation techniques work holistically. This is to say, they entrain a broad range of variables, some of which may be cognized by the practitioner, and some which he is unaware of.

In order for a biofeedback strategy to duplicate this it would be necessary to be able to completely "parameterize" that state in physiological terms such that all neuro-electrical and neuro-chemical operations could be efficiently monitored - clearly a practical, and a theoretical impossibility.

Phenomenological entrainment, on the other hand, works through the mind/brain's own bio-electrochemical organizational system and so is virtually automatic in its entrainment of subsystems, given accurate specification of phenomenological elements and lawful relationships among them. As suggested earlier however, external measures can be very useful in helping the individual to generate a given state when used in conjunction with phenomenological methods. These latter specifications do, of course, have the disadvantage that they are dependent upon effective communication. As I discuss later, most human communication strategies do not relate directly to the manner in which experience is represented in phenomenology. Thus by using both phenomenological and external "signs" we lend a greater precision to the process of learning mind-control.

Major shifts in phase of consciousness involve radical alterations in phenomenology such that the "reality" experienced in a given state may appear unreal from the perspective of another state. From the point of view of state A, state B may be unreal because the phenomenological elements and relationships among them do not "make sense" that is do not correspond to the lawful relationships which obtain in state A.

We should remember of course that the ethnographic literature demonstrates very clearly that the "reality" or rather, the exclusive reality, of the Normal Waking State is not universally accorded dominance (e.g. the Senoi, So, Tibetans, some Native North American cultures). It seems to be the case that the language, that is the "data-language" appropriate for the efficient communication of experience derived in one state, may be quite inefficient when applied to another. In information-processing jargon, the logic of the language is inappropriate for the naturally occurring data-structure.

It follows that experience derived in "state A" (e.g. "Dreaming," or "meditation") may not be readily assimilable within a linguistic code which is dedicated to "state B" phenomenological architecture. That state-specific linguistic code may be a hopelessly clumsy cognitive tool for the organization into concepts which may be communicated, or for that matter, into concepts at all when we attempt to use it beyond its appropriate operating range.

It follows that _to the extent that language is the medium which structures cognition_ (e.g. the Sapir/Whorf hypothesis) and to the extent that a given language is state-specific, experience encoded in memory which was derived from one state may not be _re-cognizable_ while the mind is in an information-processing mode other than that from which the information was originally derived and encoded.

The phenomenon of state-specific experience, encoding in memory, and resultant state-dependent recall is an example of what North American psychologists refer to as state-dependent learning. This term emerged from studies which showed that relatively minor phase shifts within global phases are sufficient to inhibit or enhance recall and performance of cross-phase material. The minor phase shifts referred to here are usually labelled "mood changes" and exist within the broader phase of the normal waking state: they include anger, arousal, boredom, quiessence etc.

Even subtle non-cognized states may be sufficient to affect recall. It has been demonstrated that material learned in a particular physical and social setting is more easily recalled if that situation is recreated either physically or in the mind of the individual.

The inability to remember experience in dreams, trance states, and meditational states may be attributable to the difficulty encountered in decoding at the level of one "linguistic" structure information which is encoded in terms of another.

The often apparently bizarre nature of recalled dream and trance material may be an artifact of encoding mode/decoding mode overlap during, for example, the hypnogogic/hypnopompic states which are characterized by waking state/sleep oscillation. This is a sort of "crossed wires" situation where a mingling of information takes place as a function of canalization pressures being minimalized.

This mixing of linguistic media results in sets of phenomenological elements, and the sets of laws which describe the relationships among those elements, failing to conform to the parameters of waking-state logic.

By analogy, this is rather like using a computer which is using one data-language to run a program written in another. This will doubtless generate some responses in the receiving system which will then organize those responses according to the system of meaning defined by its operant data-language. This canalization of relatively random material produces an output which will embody some of the meaningful units and relations among units appropriate for the linguistic structure in operation but that output will embody numerous anomalies and much apparently randomly generated material experienced as bizarre events or as nonsense.

Where there does not naturally occur a correspondence among elements of experience and relationships among those elements across phase shifts, adequate prerequisites for this shunting of information into appropriate linguistic/conceptual categories may not exist.

In a normal individual, canalization criteria emerge as a function of cybernetic interaction with the Operational Environment and comprise the interface of Operational and Cognized Environments, perhaps corresponding to Wallace's concept of Secondary Equivalence Structures (1961).

In the psychotic individual this canalization process may be disturbed such that adaptive levels of interface function are not maintained. Specifically, inappropriate "data languages" may be entrained in experience which would "make sense" were it understood and conveyed in terms of an appropriate information processing environment, i.e. phase of consciousness. Most schizophrenic utterances would be thought quite reasonable if preceded by the qualifier "I dreamt that." It is noteworthy that all of the meditation strategies which the author has studied incorporate strategies to ensure that the boundaries between ordinary reality and alternate realities are ritually marked and cognized by the practitioner. In cases where these strategies are not used, the practitioner is isolated, in retreat, from ordinary society.

Relative Reality

The foregoing sets the stage for some interesting speculation regarding the degree to which our "realities" are relative. Clearly, we are all psychotic relative to our dream-consciousness, in fact, relative to all non-waking-state consciousness. How is it then that groups of us "know" what the "real" reality is?

I will employ again at this point, the concept of "consensus-reality" which refers to the constellation of Ec elements and relationships which may be said to be relatively isomorphic among groups of human beings. Such a concept is equivalent to "culture" when applied to large aggregates. The history of Cultural Anthropology is mainly that of the study of the dialectic whereby concensus-reality is established and maintained.

It is apparent that by altering the tolerances within which isomorphism may be said to obtain we could encompass any aggregate from a dyad to the species. One set of consensus-reality parameters which proves useful for the cross-cultural comparison of epistemologies is the range of phases of consciousness which inform and are informed by those shared conceptual systems.

It is evident that not all cultures canalize experience as we do. Specifically, there are major differences in terms of the range of cross-phase data which is entrained in awareness - which forms part of the conscious Cognized Environment (e.g. "awareness) and of the Ec in its entirety.

Many cultures and sub-cultures subsume in their Ec, information derived through the normal waking state (normal waking state) and also one or more of what are termed "alternate states" by most Western researchers.

In fact, as should be apparent from the foregoing, the delineation of phases of consciousness is a process which is, in part, culturally mediated.

From the perspective of Western culture the information system (i.e. Ec, conceptual system, spoken language, etc.) which integrates these data constitutes a cross-phase integration of data in the form of a "meta-language."

It should be emphasized that from the perspective of the "Native-thinker" or Native speaker, be he Senoi, So, Native North American, Tibetan, etc., it is the Westerner, or to be fair, the Western scientist, who is limited to a primitive and incomplete macro-language, and resultant micro-awareness. It is absolutely essential that we come to realize the extent to which we have become "mono-phasic" in our epistemology, and in our awareness.

A culture as materialistic as this one will inevitably have great difficulty in coming to terms with systems of thought and epistemological strategies which are based upon phenomenological data or which emphasize the role of phenomenology in the construction of "reality." Perhaps this is one reason why the logical and phenomenological implications of our Physics have had little or no visible effect on the way Westerners view their world. Were this not the case, then surely our cultural "reality" would have been dramatically and irrevocably influenced by the "physical science" of the last fifty years. From the physics of Heisenberg to those of his descendant David Bohm, the implication is clear that, as the former suggested, the stuff of the world is mind-stuff.

Thus it is that our own strategies for knowing lead us closer to the Tantric view that the exploration and expansion of consciousness has aims beyond the personal to the transpersonal.

Whether or not we accept that the exploration of mind is the exploration of the only "reality," we are logically bound to accept the contention that the perception of "reality" requires entrainment in awareness of the full range of potential operation of our faculties. Necessarily, this must require the entrainment in awareness of all aspects of mind upon which the Ec projection is contingent. This notion is reflected in the work of Carl Jung through his model of the process he termed "individuation." My Tantric informants also agree (in the context of interviews with myself, and in public teachings) that the process of becoming "sane" (i.e. developing reality-based awareness) requires the integration into the Ec of awareness of all aspects of mind.

Clearly, such a process requires that the individual gain access to a meta-language capable of entraining (subsuming, integrating) all of the elements and relations which comprise more than one culture-bound discrete phase of consciousness. The Tibetan Tantric systems purport to embody such a facilitative language in their ritual complexes.

The question arises then, whether such a system may be properly approached with our conceptual apparatus intact. It would seem that we are likely to receive only information which is appropriate to the degree of cognitive integration evidenced by our questions. In this sense, are we bound to an endless cycle of asking our informants "if they've stopped beating their wives yet?" To paraphrase Whitehead (1961), are we not guilty of the bifurcation of Epistemology? To use our western materialistic Ec, or worse yet, our still narrower "scientific" Ec data-language to study a cross-phasic meta-language, in other words, as a sort of meta-meta-language does seem somewhat presumptuous. It is as such that my informants perceive the western scientist. They make no criticism of the enterprise of intellectual modelling per se, for intellectual scholarship is seen as a useful adjunct to practice, as well as being a vehicle for teaching certain types of individuals.

Tantric "teaching" means to facilitate the generation in the individual of specific experience which is thought to be conducive to the process of cognitive integration. The goal is not to model externally in the intellectual sense, but to internalize, to (to paraphrase Ricoeur) "allow the system to think through you," - to realize it in the body.

The notion of realizing phenomena in the body refers to the attempt to become aware of the primordial elements and processes which comprise our experience. Since the body is the instrument which creates our experience it is to the body we must look for that which is the experiencer, for the inherent nature of this being. "Body" when used in this way refers to the constellation of energies and structures which comprise the form which is identified with the being.

From the Tantric point of view, it is only when the primordial symbolic field is experienced that the individual can generate multiple transformations on that which is experienced. Prior to this point one is responding to a manifestation of phenomena unknown. To attempt to translate from this perspective inevitably involves a significant and perhaps disastrous loss of information.

We might argue that the more basic or primordial the symbolic field which is brought into awareness, the broader is the range of transforms which may be generated. It also follows that the range of potential short and long-term transformation of the Ec will, in part, be a function of the primordiality of the symbolic field which a practitioner is able to operationalize in awareness.

Learning comprises the transformation of Ec models within the limits of neural-system plasticity. Global transformation of the Ec is simply a special case of learning, at the level of deep structure.

The goal of Tantra is a fundamental restructuring of the practitioner's Cognized Environment or "reality". We in the West have tended to address religion in terms of its operation at the level of surface structure and not in terms of its operational à priori assumptions. We are in danger of specifying in our analyses sets of transformations derived in the terms of phase B awareness which are themselves based upon phase A data-language.

If we wish to specify the bridge laws (of which the ritual intervention technology is an operationalization) which enable us to deal with phenomenology from one phase of consciousness in terms of another, we shall have to use a meta-language which can subsume both. The alternative would be to "reduce" one set of phenomena to the data language (set of elements and structure of logic) of another.

Naturally a set of transforms which is designed to render cognizable in terms of a lower order data-language, concepts derived through the medium of a higher order language (the latter being characterized by less complex canalization functions) will tend to take the form of an analogue language - a system of metaphors. Such a system does not constitute a meta-language in that it permits only a truncated description of the target reality. This happens because the description of elements and relationships is limited by constraints inherent in the data-set with which the lower-order "language" is a dialogue.

Myth, ritual, and similar communicative devices may be examples of such analogues and may additionally be structured as multi-levelled hermeneutics which make possible truncated communication of correlates of experience across phase boundaries. While the lower-order analogue permits only an impoverished model of other-phase phenomenology within the frame of reference which it defines, perhaps it may be useful in triggering the experience of phenomena which are specific to other data-languages.

I must remind the reader that a language is any set of ordered symbolic elements which render possible the inter- (or intra-) personal triggering of some degree of isomorphism in phenomenology. As such, there may be said to exist "languages" within every sensory modality, and levels of language which cross sensory boundaries. Clearly too, we must recognize that language is organized hierarchically on various parameters. The most obvious of these is the degree of explicit meaning of symbolic elements.

At one extreme on this scale is the "digital" language function - the symbolic element is completely defined within the semiotic environment in which it is used. A phenomenon either is, or is not, that which is specified. Western science, where possible, uses this sort of language function.

The highly explicit language-function is, of course, a rather slow and inefficient means of communicating complex arrays of information for the very reasons which make it useful in other ways.

It is not possible to have a symbolic system which is both rich in meaning, and which also ensures functional isomorphism of experience vis a vis the object(s) of communication among interactants. In fact it is necessary to denude the symbolic elements of connotation as completely as possible, leaving only denotative functions.

As I shall discuss later, this means that anything which is not, or cannot, be made to be part of the immediate sensory environment of participants in the communicative interaction cannot be represented within such a language. Such variables must be considered as outside the purview of our research-models, and inevitably peripheral to derived theory.

Hence our psychologists tend to study "behaviour" and reduce human experience to the sterile and vague concept of "affect." With a term we eliminate that which is most meaningful to human beings when they are not being "scientists."

Similarly, the richer the data-language the more difficult it is to ensure that the communicants will have functionally identical experience. The key phrase here is "functionally identical." The reason that a scientific subset of English can approach ensured accuracy is that we consciously truncate the functions of language to eliminate differential experience with its use among communicators. Ideally we define every term and combination of terms such that all of the semiotic loading of a given communication exists or can exist within the immediate experience of all potential participants in the communicative event.

For example, if we limit a term like "sleep" to its electroencephalographic (E.E.G.) correlates we can be quite certain that individuals with disparate experience of the phenomenology of sleep (as the term is normally used) will nevertheless consider the "scientific" phenomena of "sleep" to exist at identical points in time and space. The price we pay for the use of such "operational definitions" is that their correspondence to naturally occurring boundaries in the experience of human beings is always inadequate.

Instead of exploring the range of phenomenology which defines a phenomenon with potential beyond the experience of any one individual, we are in danger of reducing our "scientific" reality to a cariacature of the human experience.

We throw so much away. In our reductionist rush to theoretical closure (Nevin 1983- personal communication) we reduce the phenomenon of man to straw man.

At the other extreme, the use of the extremely rich data-language (e.g. abstract poetry or visual art) involves the risk that perhaps not even a constant central core of meaning will be derived by the recipients of the communication. It is possible too, that a richness of meaning, real inter-subjectivity which transcends the potential of any set of operational constructs, may be the result of high-order communication.

It is obvious that the relations among the phenomenologies of two phases of consciousness may only be derived when both phases may be held in awareness simultaneously. This phenomenon is what Lama Anagorika Govinda refers to as "Multi-Dimensional Consciousness" (Govinda 1976). To achieve a state of cognitive function wherein the practitioner's phase of awareness transcends two or more phases of consciousness is a major objective of Tantric training. Such a meta-phase clearly involves a higher-order of information processing than either of the subsumed phases. It is this sort of attainment which I believe is referred to as "higher consciousness," and which has been recognized as well by Western Psychology as essential for cognitive integration, or "enlightenment" (e.g. Jung 1952, Tart 1975, Laughlin et al 1984).

The process of development of the multi-dimensional Ec, or multi-phasic awareness seems to proceed in a specifiable sequence of developmental stages which may be conceived of as post-Formal Operational in Piagetian terms. As is the case with pre-Formal Operational awareness, each stage participates at a different level of the cultural (or in the case of elite groups of practitioners, the sub-cultural) meta-language.

Dialectical Structuralism

I would suggest that where self-transformation beyond the phase of awareness of the investigator is the stated goal of an epistemological system, the researcher who (arrogantly from the informant's point of view) solicits information regarding teachings meant to be relevant to phases of awareness in which he himself does not or will not participate, will incorporate information into his models which is false or distorted - a chariacature.

The development of a meta-language to study purportedly multi-phasic epistemologies will require then, that the investigator function as a "state-specific" scientist (Tart 1975).

The foregoing arguments regarding the inevitable relativity of the Cognized Environment lead us to question the objection that this approach is necessarily subjective. The approach which often is interpreted as "scientific objectivity" amounts to the adherence to a set of à priori assumptions antecedent to the cultural and academic model of reality which conditions the coding of ethnographic data. Is it not more "objective," especially with regard to another culture's multi-levelled psycho-technology (which explicitly requires the setting aside of such assumptions, even among cultural members) to suspend culturally conditioned disbelief, and enter the system, temporarily embracing its hermeneutics?

After the system has been heuristically addressed in its own terms, i.e. within its own parameters as determined by its intended operating environment, and the "fruits" derived, we may then examine the yield in terms of alternate hermeneutic configurations. Use of the host culture's hermeneutics is essential, for these form both a part of the technology, and the conceptual and phenomenological context in which it evolved.

That which men believe to be true becomes true in its consequences, socially, and in terms of neurological process. Thus an exploration of a psychotrophically oriented system which excludes its conceptual/emotional context may yield a shallow result. Esoteric teachings are operationalized as context-specific (including state, or phase-specific) communication. This context includes the psychological state of the recipient as well as his preparedness to utilize the information in particular ways.

Within Tantra this requisite psychological environment includes the attitude of the recipient, his skill as a meditator, and his level of insight regarding the practice and its results as evidenced by his spontaneous generation of appropriate phenomenology (e.g. arising signs etc.) through its use. If he doesn't do the work sincerely and with ability he will respond inappropriately to the teacher's "psychometrics" and will disqualify himself from further penetration.

On the Ethics of Meta-Language

The use of appropriate data-language is equally relevant to the maintainance of our ethical as well as our epistemological integrity.

We owe to our informants as well as to our science an adequate interpretation of available data without omission or distortion. To indulge, however unwittingly, in the mono-phasic ethnocentric fallacy is to betray both the informant and our academic audience.

Paradigmic arrogance, however, is difficult or impossible to eliminate entirely, because the seemingly simple act of interpretation of events in terms which "make sense" to us implies the canalization of data.

This is hardly a new concept for anthropologists, but it is particularly difficult to deal with when the "ethnocentrism" in question is the result of basic sets of epistemological assumptions, concepts of "real" and "unreal" which form the basis for the investigator's own and very personal Cognized Environment, including his deepest images of "self," and "other." Add to this the difficulty in dealing with the "reality" of an elite, such as I maintain Tibetan Tantric masters to be, and the heuristic difficulties are genuinely intimidating.

How, for example, might a very average Tibetan academic be expected to render cognizable by his fellows the physics of Heisenberg and Einstein? Exceptional individuals within our own culture are often unable to comprehend this material, let alone communicate it effectively.

The "meditation masters" with whom this researcher has worked are, by and large, very impressive human beings. It is surely reasonable to assume that such advanced practitioners are neither fools nor deceivers. Additionally, it is reasonable to accept that an intelligent individual who has undergone several decades of intensive mental training may, in fact, be advanced within his epistemological system well beyond the level of the trained cross-cultural investigator.

It is possible (and from a Tibetan adept's point of view quite likely) that such a researcher would be unable to fully comprehend the teaching of a meditation master even if the latter were a member of his own culture.

In addition, the Tibetan adept accepts that our actions change us. He will not give training designed to enhance adaptive change unless the initiate demonstrates that the process is already underway.

The Vajrayana adept accepts as à priori assumption the premise that "reality" is a state of mind (or states of mind). In order to be capable of using tantric mental tools, the initiate must be prepared to alter the reality of which his "self" is a sub-set. Minimally, a student must allow the teachings to structure his understanding of them; he must avoid the temptation to structure them according to an already formed paradigm.

The western scientist, in contrast, maintains the fiction at the root of the myth of objectivity that any individual should be able to perform the same experimental procedures, and obtain the same results. Where this is not possible, the myth dictates that the findings be rejected as scientifically invalid (Nevin 1983).

As Bruce Nevin so aptly suggests:

> I could no more get "valid" results in physics without a long apprenticeship and various initiations than I could play a Beethoven sonata, and for similar reasons. Western observers have made out esoteric organizations in their own image as an elite possessing knowledge. Rather they are possessed by knowledge, by higher consciousness (as are we) and are at various stages of unfoldment into it............
>
> (Nevin 1983)

From the Tibetan Vajrayana adept's point of view the ethic whereby "higher" teachings (i.e. tantra) are kept secret is maintained to:

a) protect the unprepared outsider from information which he is not adequately prepared to understand, and which through misunderstanding might be harmful to him.

b) avoid public misinterpretation regarding the meaning of tantric teachings which might have adverse consequences for practitioners.

Given this orientation the tantric adept is unlikely to transmit esoteric teachings to any but the most dedicated of western students, and only those who are capable of making use of them. And if he is correct, then those who are not sufficiently committed and prepared would probably not be capable of informed interpretation.

It is necessary then that we challenge the myth of objectivity as natural scientists have been doing for forty years (e.g. Heisenberg). Transpersonal anthropology represents a strong challenge to that root fallacy.

Transpersonalists argue that we need to begin to develop a meta-paradigm which recognizes the human consciousness as its most sensitive instrument, and as my informants would argue, our most accurate one, once "calibrated."

In Chapter Four I shall discuss the "benchmark" used in one Tibetan tantra for that calibration.

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The foregoing argues that anthropologists should develop a model for the ritual control of experience which is capable of incorporating data amd models ranging from neurological, psychological and societal to phenomenological dynamics. Such a notion implies that data relevant to each level of analysis could be synthesized within a single analytic framework.

My purpose in the present document is two-fold in this regard. I will present an open-ended model, based primarily upon extensive ethnographic data, which is amenable to the future incorporation of neuroscience models and data as well as more extensive phenomenological data. In addition, the ethnographic material and analysis which I will present will argue strongly for the need, in future, to develop such data-sets with a view to testing and, if necessary, expanding or modifying the model.

Toward the development of a biogenetic structural model for the ritual control of experience I have introduced a number of basic concepts in the preceding pages. My purpose in the present work is not to present a one to one emic/etic model which would attempt to explain particular transpersonal data in terms of physiological data. Rather I wish to present a set of metaconcepts which might render such an integration of levels of analysis possible.

CHAPTER 3

Notes on Research Strategy and Presentation

I began the work with groups of meditators in 1974 with initiation to the "Transcendental Meditation" technique of Maharishi Mahesh Yogi. The interest in meditation as an epistemological strategy surfaced repeatedly over the next four years as I earned a degree in psychology.

It was as a graduate student in anthropology at the M.A. level that I began to systematically investigate the epistemological strategies and assumptions taught within a variety of meditation systems. During this period I worked as participant-observer with a variety of groups of North Americans oriented to several different meditational disciplines (mostly of non-indigenous origin) ranging from meditators to faith healers. One group even had a meditation machine supposedly designed by a group of non-corporeal beings who were assisting them in setting the stage for the "new age" society which they were to lead.

It was with this diverse esoteric field research background that I encountered several groups of students of Tibetan Buddhism and began to work with them. I was impressed with the depth of the teachings to which I was gradually exposed, and as I began to meet highly trained practitioners of both Tibetan and North American extraction I was impressed with their integrity and rationality. I was, on a part-time basis, doing participant observation research with Tibetan Buddhists in Canada by 1976.

Over the next four years I was increasingly accepted as a serious student, although I at no time concealed my academic interests. With a few exceptions the initiates and adepts with whom I worked accepted the argument (sincerely offered) that a seeker of truth cannot circumscribe his methodology, and that scholarship was a legitimate, and potentially useful (to others) part of my "path."

In 1978 I was given the Dharma name Sangye Yèshe (Buddha Wisdom) and in 1980 I received the ordination of "Upasaka" and was entitled to wear the upper robe like that of a monk with the white skirt of a householder. The vows involved in no way circumscribed my scholarship and were essentially those of a novice monk. In the case of the householder, the vow of celibacy is interpreted to mean fidelity to one spouse.

During the years 1976 to 1980 I was continually involved with Tibetan Buddhists in Ontario, and Alberta, with forays to other provinces and the U.S. Through this involvement I was able to meet, receive initiations from, and come to know several Tibetan adepts from different schools of Tibetan Buddhism. It was through interaction with these individuals, and through association with groups of their students in Canada over several years that I was able to come to study the more esoteric teachings.

One of the lamas who has been most generous to me in my studies informed me about the Lam Drā initiation cycle which was to be held over the Winter 1979-80. He informed me that the last opportunity was thirty years ago in Tibet, and recommended I attend. I made plans to do so but the event was postponed because a lama who was the only one who could create some of the mandalas they needed for the initiations died. In the meanwhile another high lama (not in communication with the first one) suggested that I would benefit greatly through participation in the Lam Drā in India.

The ritual cycle was re-scheduled for the Winter 1980-81, and this I attended with my wife, Dr. Heather R. Bissonette.

As mentioned, I have been careful to inform my teacher/informants regarding my academic status and research project. Because I emphasized my belief that one cannot understand a meditational system without practicing it, and because of their belief that one who sincerely practices the system will come to genuinely understand it, my informant/teachers saw little conflict between the role of scientist and that of Dharma initiate. My "belief" in the scientific enterprise constituted belief in the dharma enterprise. My wife and I attended Lam Drā as students of a well-respected Tibetan Lama who presently resides in Canada. Our role was that of tantric initiates.

Throughout the years of my work as participant observer, I have, in keeping with my informants' teachings, assumed that participation must include private as well as public practice of the array of psychological techniques which are taught to initiates. Thus, over a period of years of mediation practice, often consisting in two or more hours a day "on the mat," I have been able to generate in my own phenomenology, some of the experiences which constitute the experiential "path" which is the basis of the teachings.

Because I have taken the practice seriously, I have been taken seriously as an initiate. Because (I believe) I have explored the practices in the manner in which my teacher/informants argue they must be explored, I have been given the opportunity to receive more advanced instruction.

The research strategy throughout has been to alternate between the roles of dispassionate observer, and of full participant. Generally the former role was adopted in observing social interaction among my informants, and during public meditation sessions. The latter role was adopted in private meditation practice. An exception to this role separation must be noted. I have argued that the ritual initiation to a meditation practice, or "wang kur," is designed, through mechanisms of symbolic control, to affect the consciousness of the initiate. These are often public rituals, but, with a couple of exceptions, I endeavored to act as sincere practitioner during the initiations.

During the Lam Drā which was the culmination of my field research, I continued to act as sincere participant during all initiation rituals, and practiced the techniques which were offered. I used my own experiences of practice as one of the bases for asking questions of my teachers. My academic orientation was the basis for other questions. The goal of this enterprise was of course, to formulate questions which would lead to a model constituting a synthesis of both.

Lam Drā itself was a physically and a psychologically exhausting series of events. We were usually in the temple in the early morning, sitting on cross-legged on cushions on a concrete floor. With a short break for lunch we would be in the temple all day. After supper, we would return for detailed teachings which often lasted until midnight. For several months we were never warm as our dwelling was un-heated, and we were often ill. Throughout, the teachings constituted a continual methodical assault upon our world-view, our "reality" (such was also perceived to be the case by several Tibetan initiates with whom I discussed the matter). After a couple of months of this continual challenge, combined with physical isolation from the outside world (visits to outside Indian communities were usually precluded by our intense schedule), that world, especially the western world, began to seem like an illusion.

Recognizing that Lam Drā is designed to dissolve one's attachment to one's former reality, I kept additional field notes in the form of a phenomenological diary which was an aid to later analysis.

The Lam Drā Lobsche ritual cycle embodies teachings which are to be "unfolded" by the initiate through practice of the techniques taught therein. My teacher/informants state emphatically that the initiate has merely had "a seed planted," but that the teachings will only be understood if he waters that seed over many years of practice. It is suggested that individuals of the highest ability might fully understand the teachings after only three years of the most supreme effort. Individuals of middling ability will understand them at death, while individuals of lesser ability will understand them after no more than sixteen lifetimes.

Minimally, it would have been incumbent upon me, after receiving the Lam Drā initiations, to do several meditation retreats in complete isolation during which all activity save meditation is suspended. Perhaps a forty day Vajrapani retreat would have been followed by a six month Hevajra retreat. Ideally, the years following Lam Drā would have been spent in ritual practice. Regrettably, this was not the case.

I have however, while writing this work and fulfilling my duties as a university faculty member, attempted to practice the meditation techniques offered to us. I believe that this experience has been very helpful in unravelling the underlying epistemology.

The Question of Language

While I have studied Tibetan, I do not speak the language. It would, in fact, take many years to master the language at a level which would allow one to follow complex meta-physical arguments such as those which are the subject of the present work.

Most of the practitioners with whom I have worked have spoken English. Most of the Lamas and other teachers have had a reasonable command of the language. On occasion I have received teaching in North America from lamas who spoke only Tibetan. Invariably, however, a translator was available, usually a monk, who was thoroughly educated in English. The Tibetan religious hierarchy has made a great effort to ensure that young monks, and especially young (as of 1959) tulkus (reincarnated lamas) have a command of English, which is the official language of India, as well as the dominant language in the west. For this reason I have had little difficulty in asking questions of my teacher/informants in North America and in India. At Lam Drä all of our instructions were available either in English, or through two cooperating translators.

The usual arrangement involved a native Tibetan who spoke excellent English working with an American-born monk who spoke excellent Tibetan (and who is a student of one of the principle lamas). The lama would speak a sentence or several sentences which the translators would then discuss (if necessary) and then convey to us. Great care was exercised to ensure that the translation was in accord with the lama's intentions.

The Question of Voice

I have chosen to use the Lam Drä ritual cycle as the vehicle for my discussion of Tantra (for reasons discussed later). Because this work presents and analyses a set of oral teachings rather than a set of overt behaviors it is important to clarify the origin of the explanations offered.

Throughout this work, the teachings which I am presenting are offered by one of four high lamas who gave all public teachings at Lam Drä. I explain these teachings in light of my experience with several other lamas over several years prior to the Lam Drä initiation. Where possible, I have presented my explanations to my teacher/informants and asked for their evaluation. Such a strategy has generally required that I phrase those explanations within a Tibetan cultural idiom rather than a western academic one. For this reason I have reservations regarding the degree to which I have been able to validate my models with my teachers. I am, in effect, offering my commentary - that of a low-level tantric initiate practitioner.

It is a convention however, that an initiate should make the Dharma available to other beings who wish to hear it. The initiate is expected to limit his teaching to those topics which he understands. As I argue in this work, my informants would equate full understanding of a tantric teaching with enlightenment, a stage which I have certainly not approached. The initiate therefore, is clearly expected to offer teaching before reaching that stage. In questioning my teacher/informants on this point, I have received a range of answers which collectively indicate that teaching offered in good faith, and without pretensions of meditative attainment beyond one's true level are acceptable.

Within the Tibetan cultural context, a practitioner at my level would not undertake to explain complex and esoteric teachings to non-initiates. It would be a simple matter to refer the inquisitive to a tantric adept for instruction, and this would be the appropriate strategy. From a Tibetan point of view the business of translation from one cultural idiom to another is one which requires complete understanding which can only result from great meditative attainment. As such, I am not qualified as a "translator," and yet this is precisely the task which I presume to undertake in the present monograph.

I consulted a very high lama about the question of my "authority" to explain secret tantric teachings as an anthropologist. I did not wish to be perceived by my informants to be violating the "Samaya Vows" which a tantric initiate must take, and did not want to violate Tibetan ethics by revealing secret teachings inappropriately. He replied by commenting that it was highly unlikely that every Tibetan scholar who wrote commentaries on the tantras was fully enlightened. He suggested that if my work was an honest "commentary" and did not reveal excessive detail regarding specific practices that writing about these teachings would be acceptable.

The lamas conducting Lam Drā are presenting standardized although secret teachings. As such, it is not necessary for us to distinguish among the teachers for our present purpose. Where I report "lama teaching" I base such reports upon several sources. I feel constrained to omit the names of specific teachers and informants because I am not conforming to the rules of "authority" which characterize Tibetan writing, and further, I am offering academic interpretations which my informants would be culturally ill prepared to evaluate. It would be most embarrassing to a Tibetan lama to have attributed to him pronouncements which he cannot evaluate.

In most cases, I base my interpretations upon a synthesis of data derived from authoritative lama sources within the Tibetan tantric system. Where I describe the Lam Drā teachings in particular, those descriptions are based upon my field-notes of teachings offered in India to us as initiate practitioners, as well as answers to our questions and those of other initiates.

The interpretation of the teachings offered herein are ultimately drawn from my own partial view, that of the initiate practitioner, but not adept, Upasaka Sangye Yèshe.

Tantra: A Conceptual Overview

Studying Tantra

I have already acknowledged that the Anthropology of Religion has dealt admirably with many aspects of the spectrum of religious practice. I will now attempt to delineate in light of my data, the areas wherein I feel that traditional methodology has been appropriate, and those where I feel it has not.

Inspired by Redfield's distinction between what he called the "great tradition," and the "little tradition," I would suggest another sort of distinction between what I shall call the "extraordinary tradition," and the "ordinary tradition." I borrow the distinction and these terms from Tibetan pedagogy. My teachers use these labels as synonymous with tantric and non-tantric practice respectively.

The first or "extraordinary tradition" is the Christianity of Jesus Christ and perhaps of adepts within the Christian tradition of practice, the Buddhism of Gautama Buddha and perhaps of Buddhist adepts, and so on. This tradition represents the fruition of the religious metaphor in the awareness of the being. The second, or "ordinary tradition" represents the embodiment of religion in society and in the minds of most individuals as sets of rules, norms, folkways, etc.

The extraordinary tradition is the manifestation of the religious metaphor within the awareness of the epistemologically advanced individual, and perhaps to some extent shared within a subculture, whereas the ordinary tradition is its manifestation in the cultural mainstream.

Perhaps the primary difference between the ordinary and extraordinary traditions is that the former implies the adequate socialization of its practitioners within a particular cultural milieu, where the latter implies that the individual must transcend cultural Ec boundaries and develop awareness which is transcultural and transpersonal.

Naturally, to the cultural anthropologist, an adequate study of the ordinary tradition is more germane to the bridging of cultural boundaries. For the anthropologist of religion both are relevant, though for different reasons.

Clearly it is possible to study the ordinary tradition from the detached perspective of an observer of external events. In a way, it is the study conducted "from above." This is the study of what's going on with them. This is interesting because observing ordinary tradition activity tells us a great deal about our informants organize their conceptual universe.

The study of the extraordinary tradition is very directly the study of what is going on with us. Here, we conduct the study "from below." The average field-worker, assuming that he accepts the premise of "enlightenment" in some form, in other words, accepts the notion of the extraordinary tradition in the first place, cannot but be deeply challenged by training in any major religious epistemology. This precludes fitting the data into models of cultural process which are themselves of ordinary tradition origin.

It is my contention here that the public aspect of most established religious systems consists in what I am calling the ordinary tradition. Most religious systems also embody, and may have originally been based upon, epistemological precepts designed to facilitate the participation of the practitioner in extraordinary tradition awareness. Naturally this is a level of participation in which relatively few members of any society are fully active, in that it implies that "religion" must be the central force governing the individual's life.

It is also the case that most such transpersonal epistemologies have developed sets of strategies through phenomenological experimentation which accelerate the evolution of such awareness in the individual. Invariably the purpose of such systems is to enable the individual to discipline and control the mind such that ego-based (ie.Ec-based) distractions are less present in the process of perception and cognition. Mental re-training of any sort is arduous, and a regimen which takes aim at the basis of our concepts of self, and of being, is bound to require extraordinary dedication. Too, such a regimen will engender fear both in the practitioner, and of him, by others. It is little wonder then, that such a path will be trod by only the few whose predispositions are such that they "can do no other."

I propose, based upon the foregoing that we expand our classification of religious participation from two to three categories as follows:

1] The ordinary tradition remains the public face of religious systems. It consists in social institutions, sets of concrete precepts, rules, norms, and the public aspect of ritual.

2] We add a middle level. The level two participant orients his life to religious ends. He is what we might classify as "devout." His practice however, differs from that of first level ordinary tradition practitioner primarily in terms of intensity. Whatever his degree of fervor, he is still a little tradition practitioner. His orientation is to believe that which he already "knows" to be true.

3] I use the third classification to designate those individuals whose orientation to religious practice is specifically based upon the use of epistemological strategy. They differ from the level one and two practitioners in that they are seekers rather than those who claim to have found. Their notion of religion consists in a set of heuristic devices which may include ritual-drama and other forms of meditative practice through which they believe they may come to know, that is to directly experience, the context within which their Cognized Reality forms a subset. If such practitioners may be said to believe in anything, their belief is in the notion that enlightenment may be attained, and perhaps that a particular set of methodologies are likely to be efficacious. Such individuals are invariably cultural "outsiders" in the sense that Colin Wilson (1956) uses the term.

Such a classification scheme if applied to Tibetan Buddhism would require that we place a sizeable percentage of ordinary Tibetans in the first category, while a smaller, but surprisingly large percentage would be placed in the second. This latter group are classified by the Tibetans as Mahayana (greater path) practitioners (the former group are not really participating in Buddhism at all as the path is predicated upon living its application).

Naturally the smallest group of practitioners are those applying the third or great-tradition path. This is the Vajrayana (sansk.) or "thunderbolt" level of participation, also known as Tantra. At this level of practice the individual consciously applies techniques which purport to operate upon his mind in such a way as to clear away impediments or "obstacles" (the term preferred by my informants) to his direct experience of Advidic tenets. The direct experience of the building blocks of awareness is designed to give rise to an awareness grounded in the "plenum void" or pure mind (ie. consciousness without an object).

It is this latter level of practice which is the subject of the present work, and it is this level of practice which lends itself least to research strategies based upon the observation of "external" events. In part for this reason, Tantra has been little studied, and often erroneously represented in the ethnographic literature.

Whatever ontological status we ascribe to Tantra and its underlying assumptions, it will become evident presently that it is minimally, a highly sophisticated applied psychology reflecting a profound understanding of the human mind.

Tantra is interesting, in part, because it is a manifestation of the human mind and therefore constitutes data with which to further build our models of it. In addition however, and perhaps of even greater importance, it is itself a science of mind which may embody insights and be based upon data which do not form part of our formal epistemological structures.

To properly grasp the significance of Tantra for the understanding of religion as extraordinary tradition it is necessary to trace the evolution of ~~this~~ system in a manner which spans religious metaphors of diverse cultures. I shall then discuss the relationships between Tantra and the religious metaphors which constitute its operating context.

Tantric Concepts

Here I present a general overview of tantric philosophy. This material is based upon dozens of interviews with tantric teachers and students over a period of several years. My purpose here is to outline the basic concepts and history of tantric practice in general.

Tantra is a Sanskrit word derived from the root "tan" which denotes the feeling of "expansion." Predicated upon the assumption that "delusion" as the opposite pole to "enlightenment" is a state of narrow view, limited awareness, shallow perspective or closure, Tantra purports to be a pragmatic, experimental, epistemology which offers the possibility of expanding the individual's awareness, and faculties. Its explicit goal is to enable the individual to fully realize, i.e. manifest in awareness, the full range of the qualities of consciousness inherent in his being.

A caveat must be offered at this point regarding the term "Tantra" in popular usage. In recent times the term has been used in a looser sense to mean any literature relating however remotely to Tantric doctrines, or the practice of any esoteric technique whatsoever. The resultant proliferation of pseudo-tantras, especially those relating to the manipulation of "sexual" energy, has vulgarized the initial concept.

~~As~~ I use the terms "Tantra," "Vajrayana," or "Uncommon Path" in this work, they specifically and interchangeably refer to the historical lineages of Tantra which are referred to below. This is not to deny that new and perhaps better or more appropriate Tantras can and are being developed, but merely to avoid confusion with regard to the practices to which I refer.

The epistemology of Tantra attempts to resolve the dichotomy which humans perceive between their phenomenology and "external" reality. One might say that, inherent in Tantra by definition is the notion that an adept is one for whom the phenomenological is not separate from the physical, but rather is its fulfillment. This is not then, the exploration of the unknown, but rather the realization in awareness of the source of the known.

According to the Visvasara Tantra "what is here is elsewhere, and what is not here is nowhere." The unfolding of the here and now is seen as equivalent to unfolding all possible heres and nows. To experience directly one point in time and space is to transcend simultaneously time and space. It is taught within all Tantric systems that the result of successful practice is experience which is much more real than one's present experience of the "objective" world.

The Development of Tantra

It is essential to understand that the Tantra is not a set of techniques specific to any one religious system, or culture. These techniques were developed as the result of thousands of years of experimentation by highly trained individuals who dedicated their lives to the furtherance of this enterprise.

Most of the Tantras are anonymous, their authorship being ascribed to deities. The origins of Tantra appear to be Indo-Aryan. Thus it is still said that the only meaningful order of practitioners is the "Aryan Order," which may be broadly defined as the aggregate of human beings who are seeking enlightenment, a group which transcends monastic, sectarian, and cultural boundaries.

Tantric ritual symbols have been found from the Harrapan Culture which existed in the Indus Valley around 3000 B.C. These take the form of illustrations of Yogic postures as well as evidence of Mother and Fertility Cults which may have been "Mother Line" Tantras (a concept which I will elucidate shortly).

The Tantras and Vedas are closely related, many of the Tantras being based upon Vedic practices. At later periods, the development of Tantra was influenced by the Epics, the Upanishads, and the Puranas.

Thus, Tantra was by no means in its infancy at the time of the historical Buddha (about 500 BC) and continued to develop long after Buddhism became a major Indian religion. In a sense, Buddhism emerged from Tantra, as the Buddha Gautama apparently achieved his enlightenment through Tantric practice (a meditation on the subtle "airs," to be discussed in Chapter nine).

Because Tantra represents a body of techniques, rather than a body of theory, there has been considerable interweaving across religious metaphors throughout its evolution. Thus we see parallel Hindu and Buddhist, and I shall argue later, Christian, practices. It is impossible then, ~~to~~ trace the development of this body of techniques within a single religious metaphor.

While Tantra appears to be older than any existing text, there are references to it in early Hindu, Jain, and Buddhist literatures.

The earliest surviving Indian Tantras may be grouped into three categories according to the Deity under which they are said to operate. Thus we have Saiva (Shiva)-based, Vaishnava (Vishnu or Pancharatra)-based, and Sakta (Sakti)-based Tantras.

In addition these may be categorized according to the type of Tantra. As these teachings are usually presented in the form of an instructional dialogue, the type of Tantra is designated by the speaker/hearer relationship within the document. Thus, the Tantra in which Shiva addresses his consort Parvati is known as "Agama," where the teaching directed to Shiva by Parvati is labelled "Nigama."

Tantric practitioners or "Tantrikas" may be broadly divided into categories according to the Deity upon which their practices are based:

Saivas - base their practices on Siva, or the exploration of "male energy."

Vaishnavas - orient their practices to Vishnu

Saktas - are Sakti oriented. Their practices involve the exploration and channeling of "female energy."

Since Indian Tantric practitioners tend to favor Sakti-oriented practices the erroneous view that Tantra is essentially Sakti worship has been presented by some scholars.

Nor has the influence of Tantra been limited solely to India and Tibet. The tenets of Tantric practice spread to Nepal, China, Japan, Southeast Asia, and even the Mediterranean cultures such as Egypt and Crete.

It is difficult to determine exactly how many Tantric texts have emerged, though the number is popularly held to be one hundred and eight (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977). The earliest codified Tantric texts date from about two thousand years ago, while some of the most recent texts were assembled as recently as the last century.

The Buddhist Tantras date from the early Christian era, while those which were written or translated in Tibet date back not more than thirteen centuries, although some Tibetan practices are based upon those of the early Bon system which preceded Buddhism in Tibet. Further, we should note that documents which were translated during the early period of Buddhism in Tibet may considerably antedate the date of translation.

I must re-assert at this point that, while Tantra operates within various religious contexts, it is itself a distinct set of teachings and strategies for knowing which purports to retain its integrity across philosophical, theoretical, and religious contexts. Tantra is employed within, but is not of philosophy, metaphysics, and "religion".

Tantra is compatible with the main tenets of Indian, and

Tibetan, philosophy and metaphysics but its teachings are little concerned with theory. Tantra is methodology.

Tantra evolved within the same broad philosophical environment as did traditional Hinduism. With the rise of Buddhism in India came the adaptation of Tantra to Buddhist practice. After about 600 A.D. Tantra also co-evolved within the Tibetan Buddhist context.

Increasingly however, Tantra came to derive its direction and impetus internally, from its own sources. Thus the dialectic which formed and is forming Tantra exists largely outside of its apparent institutional hosts.

One is reminded of the situation which developed between the Gnostic Christians and the socio-political institution of the Christian church (Pagels 1981). The situation differs however, with regard to the attitude promulgated by the host institution toward the esoteric practitioners.

Within Hinduism and Buddhism the Tantric component has been considered something of an elite. While it is certainly true that an element of fear exists in the relationships among "common" and "uncommon" practitioners (as the Tibetans label them) the general feeling is that the Tantric practitioner is engaging in "higher" practice.

Fear is engendered by the conception that the Tantrist is exempt from the normal rules, norms, and folkways which allow one to predict, and to some extent to control, social interaction (he, being guided by a mysterious "higher" code of conduct which, at least in his present state, is inaccessible to the "ordinary" individual). The average Tibetan accepts though that, although he cannot readily predict the actions of the Tantrist, those actions are in accordance with a greater understanding than his own. The Tibetans seem quite comfortable with the notion that much of culture is the reflection of "ordinary" consciousness and that one who seeks extraordinary consciousness must operate outside of it to some extent.

It is because it is intended to be a sort of "phenomenological empiricism" that Tantra has been able to tolerate considerable variance in its outer trappings - its hermeneutic exoskeleton. Apparent divergence in types of practice may mask similar strategies and similar results. It is necessary to remember that the stated goal of a given set of practices must take the form of a metaphor or system of metaphors.

Such metaphors and hermeneutics are necessarily the product of an interaction among culturally mediated conceptual context, esoteric methodology, and personal phenomenology and interpretation.

Fundamental Tenets of Tantra

The following is my interpretive synthesis of the basic teachings of tantra offered by my informants over several years of field work. It is possible that some of my informants would disagree with particular points, and quite certain that they would differ in the matter of emphasis. I do not believe, however, that any would challenge its overall accuracy.

Tantra may be explored beginning at either end of its cosmological spectrum. We might begin with the Tantric understanding of the elements and properties of the human condition, the nature of the human body and its relationship to consciousness and the cosmos. We might also begin at the opposite end of the spectrum and look at the Tantric view of ultimate reality, on the cosmic level, including the theory of original creation and elements which comprise the "objective world." With either orientation however, we will discover that it is the psychic processes which interconnect man and his universe that are its primary focus.

It is the very comprehensiveness of Tantric thought which makes its cross-cultural interpretation difficult. The myriad teachings, including art, literature, and ritual, interweave divers levels of organization and meaning. As I will discuss later, the manner in which the Tantric teachings are presented, deliberately leaves to the student the task of determining which are and which are not essential or superficial aspects, a strategy which functions as a psychometric which ideally serves to limit access to "higher" teachings to those capable of using them.

In addition, the individuals and groups who created these teachings, and also current practitioners, do not appear to share the western predilection to think in terms of "levels of analysis," or even in terms of intellectual abstraction at all. To some extent then, the analyst is on his own, and yet, the prerequisites of his training compel him to indulge stubbornly in striate analysis which his informants see as essentially missing the point of teachings the starting and end point of which are the assumption and realization of a holism. Let us, nevertheless, attempt to bridge the gap using metaphors within an atomistic analysis to allude to that the full realization of which requires a holistic approach.

The practice of Tantra is predicated upon the posit that there can be created a set of "cosmic cross-points" (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977) wherein phenomenology (ie. experience on the relative plane) and universal noumena may intersect.

Thus it is believed that, using what amount to access strategies, the experience of that which is the precursor to "ordinary" experience, and ultimately the precursor to one's state of being, may give rise to a new and more veridical phenomenology a "direct experience of being" not mediated by a world-view or "Cognized Environment" at all.

At an intermediate stage, between the state of extreme "delusion" and that of "enlightenment," it would be argued that one's experience is increasingly entrained through practices rooted in "higher" awareness to participate in successively more refined Cognized Environments whereby one is less deluded.

The interstices in the Ec armor whereby phenomena and nouomena may intersect can be reached, according to Tantric teaching, through the application of a systematic method of appropriate manipulation of one's experience and cognition. The locus of such manipulation may be the physical (ie. kinesthetic) body such as through the early practices in Kundalini Yoga. One might do the work through the performance of rites and rituals including the use of visual, kinesthetic, and other forms of imagery.

A practitioner might also use the imagery of sound through the repetition of mantras, comprised in part of groups of "seed syllables" and words.

Tantra, then, may be applied at numerous levels of physical, sensory, and cognitive involvement and various levels of isolation or integration of cognitive and sensory modalities.

All Tantra, though, is predicated upon the assumption that through the skillful use of ~~the~~ diversity of human experience the practitioner may attain a state of being (or rather, a phase in the process of being) wherein his is the awareness of the indivisible whole, a level of awareness which is translated by some of my informants as "Cosmic Consciousness," or "stream entry." I may state without fear of contradiction that the purpose of all Tantric practice is to enable the individual to realize and equate himself with the state of being to which this term refers.

At this level of being, it is taught that all dualism is resolved in fundamental unity, wherein centripetality and centrifugality, evolution, and involution, expansion and contraction, "male" and "female," are intuited as separate only on the relative plane but as undifferentiated and undifferentiatable from the higher and more "real" perspective of the non-relative (i.e. non-deluded) mind.

I must note here, though, that the realization of the whole is not thought to be attainable through simple negation. This strategy is seen as nothing more than an attempt to escape from the unescapable task of evolving real understanding. Only through the process of actively developing awareness and seeking the cosmic cross-points alluded to earlier can one escape from the endless cycle of death and rebirth, the "Wheel of Life."

It is an à priori assumption of Tantra that there exists a state of unity which is the antecedent and destiny of the human mind. All of the phenomenal world arises according to Tantric precepts as the result of primordial dualism.

The primordial forces which give rise to and are a product of this antecedent bifurcation are usually referred to as a male principle (i.e. Purusha) and a female principle (i.e. Prakriti).

In Buddhist Tantra the female principle (Prajna) is that of Cosmic Consciousness the nature of which is static and undifferentiated. The male principle (Upaya) is the kinetic aspect of being. It is out of this principle that phenomena are born. Upaya may be thought of as synonymous with the forces of nature.

All phenomena are said to be both Prajna and Upaya, the two antecedent polarities. Naturally, since both Prajna and Upaya are two aspects of one principle (although they differ in their manifest qualities), they are also ultimately united and one. The perfect state of union of the two sub-operators constitutes the realization of that unity which is believed to be their essential nature and consequently the essential nature of the phenomenal world, i.e. of the phenomenological world, and therefore, of man.

Both Hindu and Buddhist Tantrists accept the above formulation with the difference that the former project in cosmology, the female as the active, and male as the passive principles while Buddhists reverse the two. This doubtless reflects culturally mediated choices in metaphor.

The diversity of the phenomenal world is seen by all Tantrists as the product of patterns of oscillation of the two underlying "male" and "female" forces which the Hindus unite in the "dance of Siva" (the Creator/Destroyer).

It is believed that only in a state where there exists a conjunction of opposites may spontaneity and bliss arise. It is in this state that nature; or phenomenology is said to be balanced and integrated, and in individual practice it is the experience of this situation, a window on Cosmic Awareness, which defines the Cosmic Cross-Point alluded to earlier.

The primordial Cosmological equilibrium is described in the Indian Devibhagavata as a state where there was no energy, and no distinction of directions. This was a state where there was not sound, touch, etc. "devoid of other forces, and full of darkness." The text goes on to say that only Cosmic Consciousness, and Cosmic Force which is existence, consciousness, and bliss, (ie. Primal male principle, and Primal female principle) existed.

This state may as easily be described in terms of a balance of three primary forces (Gunas) for which the Sanskrit names are Sattva, Rajas, and Tamas.

Sattva is the unifying, centripetal energy. The word itself, translates roughly as "essence." Rajas is the creative circular energy which underlies all manifestation. The word translates as "energy." Tamas is the centrifugal energy which is implicit in the passing away of phenomena. The word translates as "mass."

Naturally, these Gunas are not separate forces, but manifest aspects of force which are conceptually separable only when a state of disequilibrium exists among them.

In Tantric cosmology it is this state of imbalance, of loss of equilibrium, which gives rise to the process of arising, of evolution, of phenomena. It is the state of flux wherein the forces combine and recombine in plenum oscillation which projects the wave-forms which comprise the phenomenal universe.

In concert with western physics, Tantra holds that there will come a time when the primal state of equilibrium will again be reached at the cosmic plane. But it is with the attainment of the experiential benchmark of the "plenum void" by individual man that Tantra most concerns itself.

The Tantric model of Man and the Cosmos as microcosm within macrocosm, isomorphic structure echoing throughout nested semiotic universes, implies that the individual and Primordial Being are one. The process of realizing the One is seen as analogous to the moving of the cosmos to the pure consciousness of the plenum state.

This is the key to understanding Tantric thought. All that exists within the universe must necessarily exist within the human form. Thus a full exploration of the body of man will yield all possible understanding.

I must note, of course that the Tantric concept of the body of man includes several levels of analysis of the human form including not only the physiology but the psychology, phenomenology and other aspects of being.

One of the major impediments to veridical phenomenology, according to Tantra, is that we tend to analyze our world into separate parts such that we lose track of the inter-relatedness and underlying unity of Being. Thus we lose the awareness of the macrocosm/microcosm nature of our existence and construct a dualistic reality. The solution to this dilemma is to move beyond the limits of this view to a mind-state wherein the polarization of internal and external, self and other, is dissolved in the perception of a cohesive whole in which man is within the cosmos, and the cosmos is within man.

It is taught that we are aware of only a miniscule part of our real nature, and that, because of this the above realization cannot occur unless our self-awareness is expanded. From the Tantric point of view, to realize the self means to realize the full self, which is the same as to realize God, to be Enlightened, or to attain Buddhahood.

As the polarization of internal and external phenomena declines in the practitioner's awareness he is said to be able to see in all phenomena the map of his own mind. Thus it becomes irrelevant whether a practice, or study is based upon "internal" or "external" content. The structure of mind is manifest in and shapes both.

From this perspective, it is seen as axiomatic that the outer "self" which I have called the Cognized Environment (in Chapter Three) is only a partial projection of the vast totality of one's being, the inner self, or "depth-consciousness." That is to say that the reality one perceives, including one's perception of self and other, is thought to be only a partial reflection of potential consciousness. Thus it is taught that the exploration of the outer world as epitomized by western logical-positivist oriented experimental science, is merely the exploration of one's own shallow projection. More significantly, this sort of exploration is seen as without an inherently existing reference point, without any benchmark against which the veridicality of our concepts or perceptions may be gauged.

The only exploration which is thought to be useful in the quest for enlightenment is that on the inner plane which seeks to broaden one's ego-boundaries such that it becomes possible to perceive more of reality.

From the Tantric perspective, the degree to which one's ego, or Ec boundaries, are truncated as a function of past experience, and present Karma (i.e. psychic pattern-inertia) determines the range of both the internal and external phenomena which one is capable of experiencing. Thus, from this point of view, the only possible route to enduring knowledge is through internal exploration, specifically, through the expansion of awareness of the nature of mind.

To rephrase this point in more western terms, Tantra holds that one's neural/phenomenological representation of reality, one's cognized environment, one's universe of experience, both sensory and conceptual, is a highly truncated reflection of the potential experience of man. Further, Tantra argues that limiting one's exploration to within the parameters of our Cognized Reality meta-paradigm, to parahrase one of my lama teachers, is akin to sorting the sand on the beach as a substitute for exploring the nature of the ocean.

Without the benchmark of the realization of the plenum-void, sunyata, or pure consciousness (i.e. consciousness without an object), tantrists argue that one is mired in "realities" which have only relative existence. Once that benchmark is attained, it is said to form the backdrop against which phenomena are perceived as relative, interconnected, coming to be and passing away.

Thus it is asserted by all Tantric teachers that one must change oneself (one's "self",) in order to gain knowledge. This is because that which can be known is predicated upon the "view" or Cognized Environment (Ec) which accepts, rejects, and interprets information for the being. It is seen as useless to sort through "external" phenomena because nought can arise in our awareness but a recycling of the present Ec or ego-structures.

The very act of trying to "make sense" of something is seen as the act of cognitively partitioning (i.e. canalising) it such that it echos the structure of our ego-based reality. To make sense is to coerce phenomena into a semantic pattern such that they correspond to or are intelligible in the context of an existing pattern or Cognized Environment.

It is for this reason that teachers within mystical systems invariably assert that it is not possible to reach truth through a purely intellectual dialectic. The intellect according to Tantra, cannot possibly know truth because it is predicated upon a dualism which is the antithesis of truth.

This should not be taken as a statement that the intellect cannot serve as a vehicle to bring the mind to the realization of truth. This involves a rather uncomfortable set of contradictions for many mystical teachers and practitioners. On the one hand, it is taught that the intellect is a major impediment to the realization of that which is. Yet the intellect is also a powerful tool in affecting changes in perception. As shall become clear later on, considerable attention is paid in guiding the student as to precisely what role a dialogue with the intellect may play in the enlightenment process.

Clearly, Tantra asserts that the "reality" which the mind displays on the "phenomenological screen" (John Shearer 1978), which comprises the elements and structure of our awareness, is necessarily an analogue of the mind itself. For this reason, it is taught that an exploration of one part of the "external" universe can yield no truth which could not also be found in any other part. It is also taught, however, that discovery which seemingly pertains to outer reality, because it is a projection of mind, may yield insight regarding inner reality to one who has developed sufficient awareness and appropriate perspective to be able to attend to, and act upon, that information.

Thus, it is asserted that what one discovers about elements and forces which operate within the macro level in nature and the cosmos, are an analogue of patterns of meaning which govern the human mind on the micro level. It is taught that all that exists in our "external" perception, in other words, all that we can perceive in our universe must also exist within the human form.

Thus it is hardly surprising that the human form is considered to be the locus for all action conducive to enlightenment. Tantra considers any sub-process to be a valid field within the operating range of the enlightenment process. Thus, all biological, physiological, and psychological sub-processes are considered to be entrained in the process of awakening. The entire psychophysical being must attain the state which my teacher/informants call liberation.

CHAPTER 5

Toward a Tibetan Buddhist View

"Each valley its own dialect - each Lama his own Dharma."
(a Tibetan saying)

I will begin this chapter with a description of the exoteric context and organization of the Lam Drā initiations. Next I will discuss the central concepts which are introduced to the initiates in the "Nang Sum'" or more exoteric first, of two major stages in the Lam Drā. This presentation is based exclusively upon my field-notes from the Lam Drā formal teachings.

The last part of the chapter consists of an in-depth discusion and analysis of these concepts which places them within the context of Tibetan Buddhist thought. This discussion ~~is~~ based upon a broader data-set which includes discussions with Tibetan lamas over several years as well as during the four months of Lam Drā.

The Ethnographic Setting

I shall begin to describe the "path" or sequence of teachings which the initiate is likely to receive, with reference to a particular ritual cycle. The research upon which these descriptions and interpretations are based consisted in about five years of work with Tibetan Lamaistic teachers and initiate practitioners in Canada and India. The ritual cycle which I will use as a vehicle for this description of "path" is the Lam Drā

Lobsche teachings. These teachings were last offered in the form in which we received them about thirty years ago in Tibet. In this form the teachings involve about four months of very intense activity. Optionally, one might receive them during a three year, three month, and three day retreat at Lumbini in Nepal.

The teaching sequence upon which we are to focus is chosen for several reasons. First my teacher/informants present it as a complete teaching, embodying all of the path. Secondly, the Lam Drā is considered to be a pinnacle teaching (there are other "lower" forms of Lam Drā, but I know of none "higher" than this one). This particular set of initiations involve a number of esoteric teachings which can only be offered by the highest teachers in the Sakya lineage.

In fact, the entire lineage of living teachers must come together in order for these teachings to be given. The initiation was delayed by one year because one of the high Lamas died, and he was the only one who could construct some of the mandalas required for the initiation. It was necessary to wait until another Lama could prepare himself.

The term lineage is one which my informants use in English. When referring to a particular sect, the term refers both to a set of lamas who are believed to take form time and again after death such that they may be "recognized" in their new incarnation and re-installed in their former capacity as lama. Thus when we speak about the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism we are talking about a combination of genetic inheritance and inheritance through reincarnation. A lineage of teaching - the authority for a given tantra, is specified in terms of a line of transmission of the relevant oral tradition. It is to this latter lineage that I refer in the present work.

In preparation for this initiation cycle, a new temple and monastery ("Gompa") was built at the village of Puruwala in Northern India. Constructed with full traditional trappings, this Gompa is now a spiritual center for the Sakya lineage because these highest teachings have been offered there.

Some weeks prior to the initiation, monks begin to arrive in this very small rural village. Most of the arrivals are monks, and most travel in more or less organized groups representing particular monasteries. Many bring cooking apparatus, tents and related paraphenalia necessary to support a four month stay.

The village is located about eleven kilometers from the nearest market town Paonta Sahib and is situated on the Yamuna River which undulates to pass by Paonta as well. Paonta is about 11 kilometers from Dehra Dunn (near Mussurie) which in turn is about two hundred and twenty-six kilometers north of New Delhi.

The visitor travels North from Delhi by train or bus to Dehra Dunn and thence by crowded country bus to Paonta. The normal means of transport between Paonta and Puruwala and the adjoining Indian village of Gorkhuwala is either by bus which passes through Gorkhuwala once per day in each direction (at an unpredicable hour of departure) or by pedal-rickshaw. The latter mode requires about two hours and costs Rs. 10 (about $ 1.42).

Alternatively, and much more likely in the case of bewildered foreigners, is the possibility of transport with various groups of Tibetans also arriving for Lam Drä. While no

Tibetans live in Paonta, it is the main center for day to day community purchases. It is often possible to catch a ride back to Puruwala with the community tractor and wagon, or the jeep.

It was on such a tractor-pulled wagon that my wife and I and about thirty Tibetan prospective initiates arrived in the village.

Puruwala and Gorkhuwala adjoin at a crossroads. The latter is a one street village with a "clinic" consisting in one rather small table of medicines, and a post office operated in a residence. Puruwala is a relatively recent settlement populated by refugees from the Chinese invasion of Tibet in 1959.

The settlement consists of twenty-five houses constructed Asian style, with outside doors on each room and no internal doors. The houses have four rooms each. A room approximately 8'X 8' was considered to be adequate full-time accommodation for three adults although in fact, it is not uncommon for a family of four or five to occupy an 8' by 16' room in which cooking and other household activities must take place.

Puruwala's normal population is about three hundred men, women and children. In December, at the beginning of Lam Drā, a great many adults are away at the hill stations selling sweaters which they hand-make in the village.

As might be expected, an influx of about eight hundred monks and lay people strains the resources of the community to the limit, both in terms of accommodation and other services. While the monastery groups typically are equipped with tents and other accoutrements which enable them to remain relatively self-sufficient and many lay Tibetans have relatives or other connections in the community, enough individuals without contacts arrive to create a major accommodation problem. The Lam Drä population consists of:

700 - 800 people in all, including

600 monks (and a very few nuns)

200 lay people including about 30 Singaporians, 30 Malaysians, and about ten Americans - students of Dezhung Rinpoche from New York City.

Relatively few of the lay people are permanent residents of Puruwala. Most have travelled from the many Tibetan settlements in India and Nepal.

The gompa is situated about half a mile from the village and consists of the temple and a monks' residence. A wall facing the temple completes a courtyard. Some fortunate monks are able to sleep in the monks quarters of the gompa which is quickly filled. The majority of the monks are camped near the temple with relatively self-sufficient accommodation and cooking facilities.

Some monks, primarily those with relatives or family contacts are able to billet themselves in the village.

The Malaysians, Singaporians, and Americans are billeted in the "Cotee" or Indian Residence/farmhouse which is located about one eighth of a mile from the village proper.

These three groups have all sent emissaries in advance to ensure that accommodation will be available for their groups. In the process, they secure all available accommodation and make it very clear to others who arrive that the space is reserved. Unlike our Tibetan hosts who seem to assume that critical available resources are meant to be shared, the foreigners are quite content to turn away new arrivals although their own parties have not yet arrived.

Because no rental accommodation is available, refusal to allow someone a bed means that they must sleep on the ground, or among the grain sacks and rats in a warehouse. It was here that the author and wife spent several nights awaiting a place to sleep.

This experience and others are reported because they convey important information about the behaviour of non-Tibetan initiates which is greatly at odds with behaviour deemed appropriate for any Buddhist, and which is also at odds with Tibetan norms.

In order to cope with the influx of foreigners and lay individuals who are not able to cook for themselves (for attendance at Lam Drā is to be a very full-time occupation) the community Executive has set up a canteen. The room, about 10'X 25' is formed by hanging empty grain sacks to form a wall which encloses a porch on the Indian farmhouse. Adjoining this "room" is a kitchen consisting in a set of shelves, and a four hole wood-burning mud-block stove. The stove and the room lack a chimney or any means for the smoke to escape save the door.

None of the houses in Puruwala have any form of heating system and the nights in December are cold. Most families cook with crude kerosene portable stoves hardly larger than the popular "Primus"-type stoves popular with European hikers and mountaineers. Most houses (a room in the four room structure is referred to as a "house") are equipped with rough wooden beds (not nearly so comfortable as the Indian rope "charpoy") which serve both for sleeping and as general purpose furniture. In one corner will be the kerosene stove, several pots, and perhaps a tea-churning device.

On another wall will be a household shrine on which daily offerings are made and which forms a focal point for the room. In the middle of the village, of stick construction is the village temple.

Notably absent, both in the village and at the gompa are latrines. In truth, Puruwala is possessed of a two bowl Indian style (floor level) "squat and hope" facility, but the bowls have long been filled such that a mound of excrement protrudes well above their rims. The inhabitants prefer the traditional practice of relieving themselves on the ground in the general vicinity of the village. This preference is also shared by the visitors.

During the next four months, especially as the weather warms, eight hundred individuals, many in poor health, visiting the small field beside the temple every day will create an olfactory ambience which is memorable. Some effort was made to centralize these excretory functions by building platforms over a nearby ravine with several appropriate sized holes. Signs in Tibetan advised their purpose and requested their use.

Doubtless some initial compliance occurred but was quickly precluded by use of the rest of the platform as an extension of the "lavatory" field. Indeed it can be said that many of the visitors appeared to see a footpath primarily as a target.

Added to the respiratory consequences of the preferred method of waste disposal is that of Himeschal Pradesh's only large industry. This is a cement factory located some miles down the valley from which clouds of acrid smoke can always be seen. The plant lacks even simple scrubber-type anti-pollution technology and pumps lime into the atmosphere at an alarming rate. Most newcomers to Himeschal develop what came to be dubbed the "Himeschal hack," convulsive fits of coughing as the lungs attempt to rid themselves of this pollutant.

My informants in the village thought it odd that visitors to their community invariably developed respiratory problems at least at the level of an annoying cough. An Indian doctor in nearby Paonta Sahib was similarly mystified but confirmed that newcomers to the valley invariably suffer from the mysterious respiratory ailment.

Finally, on high-ground at the head of the village, and somewhat removed from it, is the "palace" which belongs to His Holiness the Sakyapa, head of the Sakya lineage of Tibetan Buddhism. The Sakyapa normally lives on Rajpur road near Dehra Dunn, but will stay in Puruwala during this initiation.

The early days of Lam Drā are a time for socializing, and for attending the temple consecration ceremony, and various public initiations (i.e. initiations which are not predicated upon the initiate being committed to full participation in the Lam Drā ritual cycle). However, as Lam Drā proper gets underway most of the residents of Puruwala will not attend.

Many have other obligations in the community, and many feel that the initiation is too great a commitment. For this is to be "high tantra," and must not be taken lightly. In the course of this initiation many vows will be taken, and these might be difficult for a layman to keep.

One senses some doubt that we uneducated foreigners could be capable of understanding or willing to practice the teaching which is about to be offered to us.

Lam Drā Begins

One feels more than hears the temple gong in the very early morning. The subsonics must be higher amplitude than the audible part of the gong's call. It is still dark but those who are cooking have been doing so for an hour. Monks and lay people wait their turn at the few available cold water taps to wash. A few monks are doing their Sadhana (meditation practice) others are washing, or drinking Tibetan tea. There is very little time to get to the temple before the teachings begin.

Each monastery is assigned a seating area in the temple - eight hundred of us in a building about the size of a small auditorium. The air is still chilled, and clouds of incense rise from temple burners. There is good-natured banter and quiet meditation amid an air of expectancy as we await his holiness or other high lama who will offer the days instruction and perhaps initiations.

Monks and lay people enter, walk gingerly to their places, gently pushing aside but never stepping over the hundreds of bags, enameled steel tea cups, several Lhaso Apso dogs, Dharma books and personal ritual objects, etc., which are scattered throughout the crowd. Facing the Buddha Rupa (literally "Buddha form" in this case, Buddha statue), they begin three grand prostrations. When the teaching Lama enters he does three prostrations before the Buddha Rupa, and when he finishes, all rise and again do three prostrations chanting:

"Namo guru veh" - Salutations to the Guru
"namo Buddha ye" - Salutations to the Buddha
"namo Dharma ye" - Salutations to the Dharma
"namo Sangha ye" - Salutations to the Sangha

The day is divided into three parts for teaching purposes although the content of morning and afternoon sessions is not constant. Typically the morning session will be devoted to either "lung" or "ti," or to ritual initiation ceremonies called "Wang Kur".

Before an initiate is considered prepared to study a text he must first receive a "lung" or textual transmission for that text from an appropriately qualified lama. Quite literally this means that the lama has to read the text to him. It is important that the text "pass the lips" of the lama before the initiate attempts to study it himself. Much of Lam Drā will be spent receiving lungs. There are twenty-six Lam Drā texts.

Ti consists in instructions for meditation and awareness practice given formally, primarily by the Sakyapa. Ti differs from Lung in that it consists in sets of instructions for actual practice.

It is further important to differentiate this "lineage teaching" from the "lama teaching" wherein an individual lama offers his interpretation of the Dharma. When Sakyapa offers lineage teaching he wears the lineage crown to signify and perhaps enhance the element of transmission of an unbroken line of orally transmitted instructions for practice.

Evenings are spent receiving detailed teachings on the events of the day. There is an opportunity for questions, and discussion of the instructions.

As often as not the teachings end between ten o'clock and midnight.

Ideally one is advised to practice the meditations taught during the day at least three times before the next day's teachings. These instructions are clearly more appropriate for the three year retreat. Most initiates are able to do little besides eat food which someone else has cooked perform minimal toilet, and sleep during the more intense parts of the initiation.

Nang Sum - The Triple Vision Teachings

Throughout, the initiation is dedicated to enabling the initiate to develop the "correct view." As the Lam Drä progresses the psychophysical level (from a Tibetan perspective) at which the view is presented will change. The progression from exoteric to esoteric teachings involves sequences of repetition of the same major themes involving, at each stage, a more advanced or to use my teachers'/informants' term, more "complete view." Each level of "partial view" relating to a given topic is subsumed by the next level of teaching which will in turn be subsumed by a more complete view.

At first the initiations are relatively public, and aimed at relatively practical outcomes. For example, during the first day we receive the initiation to "Namgyalma" primarily in order to be free of illness during the initiations to come. In this case, the initiation did not offer complete protection - I developed a serious lung infection which took its toll on my health for several years. At this time, I was very ill for some days. One of my Tibetan monk aqaintances commented that it was indeed fortunate that I had received the protection of the initiation because if I had been any more ill my life would have been in danger.

The initiation ritual to a meditation practice is called "Wang Kur." The Wang must be given by a Lama who has clearly "realized" that practice. There is an element of instruction in the practice, an element involving the presentation of sets of symbols upon which to meditate, and also an element of "direct transmission" which the student derives from the clarity of the Lama's own meditation. I will describe Wang Kur in greater depth later.

The initiates-to-be are given a lung or textual transmission dealing with appropriate conduct during Lam Drā. The student is advised:

-not to entertain doubts or spread aspersions regarding the qualities of the lineage holders or the teachings.

-and to observe traditional discipline carefully

Establishing The Authority

Next a detailed history of the propagations of these teachings is offered. It is explained to the initiates that this is done so as to establish the "authority" for the teachings and the teachers.

The early propagation of these teachings was through the five great masters who participated in the early Nyingma tradition. That is to say, the early transmission of the teachings was through Lamas in the Nyingma lineage.

The "middle" period of propagation was through the masters Ngorchen Dorje Chang and Tsarchen Losal Gyatso. The late transmission was through Kyentse Wangpo and his emanation who was known as Kunga Gyaltsen Pal Zangpo who was the great Sakya Pandit.

Next, the attributes of Kunga Gyaltzen Pal Zangpo are described in detail. The eight attributes are as follows:

1/ Kunga Gyaltzen Pal Zangpo merited the title "Pandit" (an Indian title) because he had mastered all five fields of knowledge in the sciences.

2/ Kunga Gyaltzen Pal Zangpo was a descendant of all the Tibetan Lotsawas and was the first to have transmission from Sanskrit without needing an Indian Pandit as an intermediary to correct his understanding of the teachings.

3/ Kunga Gyaltzen Pal Zangpo established ten sciences in Tibet which were unknown before.

4/ He defeated the greatest Hindu ~~master~~ Haribhutra in debate and therefore strengthened Buddhist philosophy.

5/ His were the first Sakya Pandit's writing to be taken for study by the Indians.

6/ He invented the Mongol script which was later perfected by Phagma Rinpoche.

7/ He brought Buddhism to a barbarian country (Mongolia) in accord with the prophecy by Dhagpo Gyaltsen.

8/ Signs which had previously appeared only on the historical Buddha Sakyamuni and the great Pandit Siddha Nagarjuna, appeared on Kunga Gyaltzen Pal Zangpo's body.

Thus the first part of Lam Drā consists in the attempt to establish the legitimacy or "authority" for the present transmission. A great deal of emphasis is placed on the continuity of transmission from the original masters to the present ones. While the progenitors of such teachings are usually said to have received the teachings directly from deities (as in the case of Virupa described later) such feats are limited to beings of the highest attainment, and so most "embodiments" of the teachings receive them from a lama-teacher. Still involved in this transmission are elements other than those which constitute ordinary non-esoteric teaching. There is the notion that some aspect of "direct transmission" occurs outside of ordinary communicative modalities. I will discuss this notion at some length later.

As well as the non-ordinary aspects of transmission, the more mundane ones are also thought to be important. It is recognized that only someone who has fully understood the meaning of a teaching, self-consciously a set of psycho-religious metaphors, can hope to adequately communicate a "complete view" of those teachings. Where the realization of teachings is derived from meditation practice, only one who has mastered the practice himself can hope to serve as guide.

First Initiations and Instructions

On the morning of the second day of Lam Drä a short Wang Kur is given for the deity Ritrodma Lama Khyunna. The wang is conducted with little fanfare and involves all initiates at the same time. As we shall see shortly, wangs vary in terms of their requirements, with major wangs being given only to small groups.

Next is given a wang kur for Panashavati, primarily again, an informant tells me, to protect our health during Lam Drä.

After the brief initiation several lamas give talks on central Buddhist texts such as the Abhidarma and Prajna Paramita. Very few of the students from the U.S., Malaysia, or Singapore remain for these speeches, and by the third talk a great many monks leave.

I comment to myself in the border of my field notes "these guys go on and on with little hesitation and no audience feedback. Have they no mercy?" Even for Tibetans who are accustomed to sitting cross-legged on low cushions hours of sitting in this posture can be tedious, for the Singaporeans, Malaysians, and Americans it seems to be unbearable.

His Holiness' son Vajra Ratna Rinpoche (a title usually confered upon high teaching lamas) is seated on his own throne during many of the talks, he seems to be free to leave and return as he wishes. His age is seven years, and one is impressed by his stamina. He often sits quietly for several hours at a time listening to the teachings.

Attitudes of Body and Mind

During the evening, the initiates are told that traditionally one is supposed to meditate three or four times at least between teaching sessions. His Holiness has passed on instructions that since time is so short we should try and do at least one or two meditation sessions between teaching sessions. Even this obligation proved a very difficult one to meet because we had little time to do more than eat and sleep.

The day's teachings are discussed at some length and include instructions for posture of both body and mind.

The instructions for how the body should behave are given first:

1/ You should sit in front of the guru, facing him. Especially one should not sit at the back or sides of the temple either physically or by imagination. Doing this would bring "obstacles." (to be dealt with shortly).

2/ You should sit in a cross-legged posture, preferably the "full-lotus" or with at lest one leg crossed.

3/ The body should be erect, and bowing a little.

4/ The head should be uncovered

5/ One should not have umbrellas or weapons

Next, instructions for the posture of mind are given:

1/ One should listen carefully to the teachings and one should avoid the faults described below.

a) vessel upside down - do not reject the teachings, but rather open to them.

b) dirty vessel - do not allow impure thoughts or anger to pervert understanding. Recognize that the residual poison of past karma, your defilements alter and pervert your understanding of the teachings

c) broken vessel - you must carefully use your memory in order to retain the continuity necessary to comprehend the teachings.

d) receiving the teaching with pride, such as the idea that you are higher than the teacher, or have only come for this particular teaching. Rather see oneself as patient, and the guru as doctor.

e) do not come to assess the guru

f) do not think less of the guru, or become frustrated even if you study the teaching and still cannot understand.

g) faults in the outer appearance of the guru should be seen as our faults.

h) if we cannot understand or make use of the guru's teaching, have the idea that the guru's teaching may be meant for others even if it doesn't appeal to us. The teaching however (i.e. that which is taught) is still to be seen as marvelous.

i) focus the mind on the teaching, not on other works, don't laugh or make jokes.

j) do not just meditate instead of listen

k) do not be disheartened if you don't understand the meaning of the lama's words, just try again.

l) do not allow your attention to flag because a session is long.

It is most important to have and maintain "right intention," based on the "Bodhisattva ideal." One must seek these teachings in order to gain enlightenment not for one's own benefit, but for the sake of others.

In order to use this teaching properly it is necessary to maintain several key conceptions:

1/ We must see the guru as a physician who is attempting to heal us the patient. Think of the guru as he who is attempting to heal us.

2/ See the teaching as medicine, as the tool the guru will use to heal us.

3/ Recognize the necessity of practice. We must do the meditation work, or to use the physician metaphor, we must take the medicine if it is to be expected to work.

4/ We must see our friends the other members of the Sangha as nurses. This is the notion that "right companionship" enhances the healing process which is managed by the guru.

It is also necessary to develop the "four faiths:"

1/ Devotion - this is understood to mean devotion in an immediate sense - the sensation of devotion.

2/ Desire - we must have heard about the teaching and this must provoke in us the need to search for a teacher and a teaching. There is contained in this the notion that the seeker will inevitably find the object of his desire.

3/ Confidence - we must develop confidence in the teacher and the teaching based upon good and thorough understanding.

4/ Ultimate faith - this highest faith is seen as non-contingent. The implication is that only an attained being can fully manifest this faith.

At this point, and throughout the Lam Drà cycle it is emphasized that it is absolutely essential to learn to see the guru as the Buddha. This is the notion, not that the guru represents or stands for the Buddha, but rather that he is the Buddha. This is a logical consequence of the assumption that all beings have a "Buddha nature," i.e. the idea that the essential nature of all beings is Buddha, and that one who has cleansed himself of karmic defilements is therefore, in every sense, an embodiment of Buddha.

Taking Refuge

After the above instructions are offered, the instructions are given for a meditation as follows:

> Place your body in the meditation posture and imagine that the place where you are sitting is filled with saphire and is very comfortable, even and flat.
>
> Imagine that in front of you is a wish-fulfilling tree.
>
> In that tree is a lotus flower with four leaves
>
> In the center of the lotus there is a lion throne (i.e. a throne supported by two lions).
>
> On the throne, imagine your root guru (he from whom you have received the highest teachings) in the form of Vajradhara.
>
> The deity is blue like the Autumn sky with one face and two hands. In his right hand he holds a five pointed vajra, and in his left is a golden bell.
>
> His hands are crossed at his chest so that the vajra and bell are also crossed.
>
> He is sitting cross-legged, adorned with the major and minor saints and surrounded by the lineage gurus.
>
> Upon the front leaf of the lotus, Sri Hevajra is heading all the deities.
>
> Upon the right petal is Buddha Sakyamuni surrounded by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.
>
> Upon the rear petal of the lotus are huge piles of dharma books.
>
> Upon the left petal is the "Bodhisattva Sangha." (i.e. the community of awakened beings who have elected to stay in Samsara

in order to help all sentient beings.)

We imagine that in front of the tree on the earth are our father on our right and mother on our left. One's self is imagined to be in the middle and in front of one are all sentient beings, headed by our enemies.

We then think about the endless suffering of all sentient beings which will continue forever if they don't take the fruit which is being offered.

One should think that the gods are not a perfect refuge because they are in Samsara themselves. The Hinayana Arahats have incomplete understanding, for they are not skilled in working for others.

One should think that only this tree is a perfect refuge. Only this refuge combines the power and compassion.

One maintains this thought of refuge and imagines that all sentient beings are also taking refuge.

Now one should bow one's head and recite the refuge prayer

One should recite the refuge prayer until one has "signs," that is, until one's hairs stand on end, or tears begin to fall.

At this point rays of light from the Buddhas touch all beings and disperse all obstructions.

All beings become Buddhas, and fly like birds to the Buddha Realms (i.e. realms of being of the order of "heavens").

All of the components of the visualization become rays of light and vanish into one's root guru who vanishes into rays of light and disappears into one's head, filling our whole body becoming inseparable from us.

At this point one meditates without further visualization for a short period.

After the refuge visualization it is explained to the initiates that one should do the refuge meditation often, and especially at the beginning of any meditation session.

Some mention is also made of the nature of the sufferings of all sentient beings, including those of the "hot hell" and "cold hell" (which are discussed in detail later).

The Lam Drā is so demanding of our time and energy that we settle into a routine very quickly. We have no time to think of anything but the teachings and the mundane activities necessary to maintain our attendence.

Beginning with the third day a pattern is established whereby mornings are devoted to the giving of lungs. It is noteworthy that the lungs are read by the Venerable Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, universally regarded as one of the highest lamas in the lineage. Clearly there is some notion that the understanding and attainment of the lama who reads the text to the initiates is important.

This is especially evident when we consider that the Rinpoche reads with an accent which many of the Tibetan initiates find difficult to follow, and that he is reading the texts at a speed which approaches that of a North American auctioneer.

The afternoon of the third day begins, after the usual chanting with a wang kur for the deity Vajrapani (destroyer of obstacles). No detailed instructions are offered regarding the precise form of this meditation at this time. The fact that one has received the wang seems to be sufficient for the moment. This is followed by a textual transmission of the Sakya lineage.

After the wang His Holiness begins to give "ti" the textual transmission of meditation instructions. Because these are the main contemplations, and one has to be able to think about them and absorb them in some detail, the ti's are read three times.

This particular textual transmission consists in three main themes, 1) a discussion of refuge and bodhicitta or "Buddha Heart", 2) contemplations on the visualizations 3) contemplation on the various kinds of suffering which are the result of immersion in Samsara.

The Teaching on Bodhicitta - Buddha heart

The first set of contemplations are designed to support the development of bodhicitta (Buddha heart) or compassion (often also translated as "loving kindness"). The student is encouraged to examine the nature of sentient beings, and recognize that due to their composite nature all beings are subject to "dukka" (usually translated as "suffering"). The student is reminded that because all beings have been undergoing an cycle of death and rebirth since "beginningless time," all beings have been our fathers and mothers, lovers and enemies and children countless times.

Since we have received parental nurturance from all beings at one time or another, and kindness in many other forms from all sentient beings countless times, it is pointless to base emnity upon the events of only this lifetime.

The student is instructed to think that all beings have endured eons of suffering, each being spending thousands of years as each animal species, and all have lived in every possible relationship to us. Therefore we must realize the error of not recognizing our fathers and mothers, and of even treating them as enemies.

One is instructed to form the thought of wishing freedom from suffering for all of our fathers and mothers, i.e. for all sentient beings. Because of this one decides to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

As a continuation of this contemplation one now recites the refuge prayer and does the appropriate visualization (described earlier) three times.

The Teaching on Samsara - the World of Illusion

One is also instructed to meditate upon the faults of Samsara (the world of illusion, the opposite of Nirvana). One should recognize that even those aspects of samsara which appear to us to be pleasant inevitably lead to suffering, that all relative states contain the seeds of suffering.

Incarnations - the Realms of Existence

It is also suggested that the student meditate upon the fact that only the human body can be a vehicle for liberation from Samsara. One should think about the incredible difficulty in attaining the "precious human body." The allegory used is as follows:

> "If all of the world were covered in water, and floating upon the surface of that water were a yoke (as in a Yak yoke) and a turtle were swimming in that ocean who surfaced only once every hundred years - your chances of attaining a human body are about the same as the likelihood that the turtle will surface with his head in the yoke."

Even more precious then is the attainment of a human birth with the right conditions for practicing the Dharma.

Further, one is instructed to meditate upon the faults of Samsara specifically in terms of the suffering of the various realms of existence. The first major category of suffering is called the "suffering of suffering" and refers mainly to the various hell states.

The Cold and Hot Hells

Detailed descriptions are offered regarding the nature of the suffering beginning with the hell states.

There are three main divisions of the hell states and sixteen minor divisions. The three main divisions are the cold hell, hot hell, and neighboring hell. (I preserve the personal pronouns used by my teachers).

Within the cold hell are eight divisions as follows:

1/ In the first cold hell the "hell of ice and snow" one is naked in a land consisting only of ice and snow.

You have a large body with a smooth surface. You run and run all around in the snow mountains and repeatedly fall down. There is severe pain and the body becomes badly blistered.

You should think that there is no guarantee that you won't be born there, and that the suffering is too great to bear and there is no means to get out once you are there.

So you should avoid this rebirth and therefore practice Dharma, the best of which is the precious Lam Drā, so from now on you should practice Lam Drā.

2/ Second is the hell of the bursting blister. This hell is colder than the last one. Here the creature has numerous blisters which burst, and iron insects issue from the broken blisters and eat the creature.

3/ Third is the "Achoo hell." In this scenario the creature has no options at all, so he just says "achoo" (trans. "cold").

4/ The main characteristic of the fourth hell is that the cold is greater than the previous ones.

5/ In the fifth hell it is too cold to speak and one's teeth chatter.

6/ In the sixth cold hell there is a cold wind which disperses our blood and pus. Our skin turns blue and cracks.

7/ In this hell we are badly frostbitten, and the wind is so strong that our blue skin falls off. The red flesh underneath cracks with the cold.

8/ In this final cold hell, the cold wind is so strong that our flesh breaks into many pieces, but we are still unable to die as our karma is not yet finished.

Next begins a description of the "hot hells."

As with the cold hell, there are eight divisions of hot hell as follows:

1/ First is the hell of burning iron. As with the cold hell one is possessed of a large body. Everything about us is made of hot iron - as soon as the creature is born it is burnt.

You run in every direction looking for a savior but instead are chased by fearful hell gods armed with arrows, spears, swords and axes.

They chop your body into many pieces. You become very angry, and whatever you hold in your hand becomes a weapon. The cut up creature falls unconscious.

Then a sound from the sky says arise, a cold wind restores the being, and then the torture begins again.

2/ Second is the "Black Line Hell" wherein the hell gods trace black lines on our foreheads. Next our body is cut from head to navel and then restored. Next we are hung upside down and the hell gods begin at our feet and cut down from them. Then we are restored and the process is repeated.

3/ In the third hot hell the creatures body is crushed until his internal organs spew out of the body. Then he is restored and the process begins again.

4/ The fourth stage is the "crying hell" in which you run away from your tormentors and see a white house of refuge. You run towards it but as soon as you enter it becomes a house of burning iron.

5/ The fifth scenario is similar to the fourth except that inside the first house is a second. The being's suffering is greater because of the worry that he is "jumping from the frying pan into the fire."

6/ In the sixth stage the being is skewered on a burning iron pole. Then the pole is removed and the being is restored only to be again impaled.

7/ The seventh is an even hotter hell in which the being is impaled head and shoulders upon a three pronged pole of burning iron.

8/ Eighth is the hell of iron frames. The creature and the burning iron frames become inseparable. This hell is only occupied by those who have committed heinous sins like killing their parents.

The third major hell type is the "third neighboring hell." It has four divisions.

1/ When the hot hell sentence is over the creature is driven away by the hot hell gods. He sees a path to the east. As the creature follows it he sees a large round clearing. Because he has seen only burning iron he thinks the clearing is earth and enters it but in reality it is filled with burning embers and ashes. His feet are burned to the bones. He then falls down and his whole body is burned until only the bones are left. You can't run away because the place is surrounded by hell gods. The being must suffer here for eight hundred years.

2/ After the creature is delivered from the first hell state he sees a beautiful waterfall. The hell gods make way for him, and he has a very strong desire to get there.

When he does arrive however, the place is filled with rotting corpses and hell beings. It is very hot and dirty, and smells awful. There are many unpleasant insects etc. He falls down from the unbearable pain and his body is burnt and rotten. He must remain here for about one hundred years.

3/ When the karma appropriate for the last hell is finished the creature is allowed to run away.

He sees a piece of grassy ground and runs toward it. The place turns out to be filled with swords and knives. Because of them, his steps are so painful that he falls down whereupon his body is cut up by large knives.

This cycle repeats for about one hundred years. Then he sees a large forest and tries to rest in the shade of a tree but a wind comes up and the branches and trees fall and become weapons (which further torment him).

When this is finished he runs away and sees a beautiful hill. When he arrives at the foot of the hill he is attacked by fearful animals who eat him alive.

On top of the hill he sees his relatives of past lives calling to him. As soon as he hears them he becomes very attached and runs up the hill which is covered in iron tongs.

After many difficulties he gets to the top of the hill at which point his friends and relatives disappear. He becomes very sad, and many birds come and pick out his eyes and eat his body. The he is restored and the whole hill/relatives/birds cycle is repeated for one hundred years.

4/ In the fourth neighboring hell scenario the creature is tossed into a lake of boiling water. The boiling water reduces him gradually to bones but because of his past karma he cannot die, and he cannot escape because of the hell gods. As soon as he is reduced to bones he is hooked out of the lake and restored only to be tossed in again.

The initiates are told that one being goes through all of these hells if one's karma assigns one to the cold hell. It would seem possible that a being might earn only the hot hells, but every creature of the cold hell has to go through all sixteen hells.

As well as the sufferings of the cold and hot hells are those of two other "lower realms," those of the "pretas," and the "animals."

The Pretas

The pretas or "hungry ghosts" are characterized as beings whose "stinginess" or greed produced the appropriate karma. They are beings usually pictured with large bellies and small heads and especially with small mouths. This is a realm of never-ending desperate craving. The preta can never ingest enough food to satisfy his hunger with his tiny mouth. When he eats, the food burns as it enters his stomach. Water turns to fire when he tries to drink it.

The student is told to contemplate the suffering of a preta, to imagine how great the suffering must be if one is unable to get food for even one day in one hundred thousand years. There is no guarantee that we will not be born as a preta. Therefore, in order to avoid being reborn as a preta we must practice the Dharma, especially the Lam Drā.

The Animal Realm

There are two divisions of the animal realm, "staying in one place" and "scattered".

1/ The "staying in one place" beings are creatures of the ocean. They are tossed everywhere, west to east and east to west when great waves occur.

2/ The "scattered" beings are on land as animals. Domestic animals suffer by being forced to work, being milked, and so on, while wild animals always have fear, even while eating. In addition the wild animals have the suffering of eating each other, large animals eating small ones, and many small creatures in turn consuming large ones.

The point is carefully made that the hells and other states of suffering are states of being, or more precisely states of mind, just as the present state is a state of mind. The being who dwells in the hell states is said to continue making the choices which produce his torment because of his karma. The point is that it is not any outside agency which condemns the being to the hell states or to any other form of suffering but rather the karmic propensities which are the result of the being's own actions of body, speech, and mind.

The Suffering of Change

This suffering is primarily the affliction of Devas, Asuras, and Humans. The suffering of change stems from the unavoidable reality that all things are naturally impermanent. Emperors are born as servants, gods (for example Indra) are born as ordinary beings; nothing is permanent.

The Devas, because they have accumulated various merits in past lifetimes have every worldly comfort and do not have to work hard. They just experience worldly pleasure.

The Devas don't produce the thought of accumulating virtues even for one second but their life, while very long, does come to an end.

A sound comes to say that a particular Deva is going to die. Naturally this deva becomes very sad. A Deva has the ability to see into the future, and he knows that all his virtuous actions of the previous lifetime have been (karmically) used up. As a result of this he knows that as a result of his life of worldly pleasure he will be born in a lower realm. For this reason he has great mental suffering, 100,000 times worse than any physical suffering. After their death, Devas are reborn in lower realms.

The Asuras (demi-gods, "the power-seekers") are born with their minds filled with anger. They spend their days fighting and arguing and especially are jealous of the Devas. They attack the Devas but are always defeated.

The Human Realm

The greater (wealthier) have greater mental suffering while the lesser (poorer) have greater physical suffering. All humans have the sufferings of old age, sickness, and death.

Human beings suffer especially with "the suffering of impermanence." Of this there are three types as follows:

1/ In every life we start many works which are never finished.

2/ One is never satisfied with the worldly pleasures one experiences through all lifetimes from time immemorial in Samsara. It is not a part of the makeup of ordinary human consciousness to be satisfied. Every new object or attainment gives rise only to temporary pleasure which is inevitably displaced by new desires, new dissatisfaction.

3/ One is not satisfied with life, in particular, one is never satisfied with one's birth (i.e. level of birth). We have been born and reborn from beginningless time and still we are not satisfied.

The purpose of the teachings on the various forms of being is to produce in the initiate disgust with composite existence and the desire to escape from the endless cycle of death and rebirth. The initiate is expected to come to understand that within composite form, human, deva, or otherwise, no releif exists because suffering is inherent in such forms. He is therefore expected to be motivated to relinquish attachment to this or any other life and seek only enlightenment.

Certainly all of the initiates are disgusted with life in general by this point in the initiation. We have been continuously cold, and physically uncomfortable for many days, and have not had time to rest. We have had little opportunity to be alone, and our sense of self has been challenged relentlessly throughout these first teachings. Our fellow initiates are clearly feeling the strain - everyone seems agitated and insecure. We know also, that this is only the beginning.

Escaping the Wheel of Life

So it is taught, one should stop doing such things as cause one to be reborn and like a bird running away from a burning forest we should seek methods of liberating ourselves from the wheel of life.

The next set of contemplations are those on 1) the value of the precious human birth, and 2) the short duration of that form.

The Value of the Precious Human Birth

After knowing the nature of suffering as described in the previous contemplations one naturally seeks liberation from them. Having sought alternatives one logically concludes that only Dharma is a means to escape the endless cycle of death and rebirth.

Further, one finds that only by being born as a human can one practice Dharma. Therefore one should accumulate virtuous action because the benefit of a human birth is very rare.

The following forms are devoid of the "favorable conditions:"

1/ Pretas

2/ Animals

3/ Barbarians (a term usually used to refer to the "wild" border tribes of Tibet. Foreigners often fit this category.)

4/ long-life gods (never defined further in these teachings)

5/ no-Buddhas (a sort of anti-Buddha)

6/ fools

7/ those with wrong views

There are "the favorable conditions" which are necessary for the attainment of liberation. In addition to a human body, one's goal is to accumulate sufficient merit to attain a birth with the "favorable conditions". They are as follows:

1/ A human birth

2/ birth in a land where there is Dharma

3/ right views

4/ faith in the Triple gem (Buddha, Dharma, Sangha)

5/ the arising of a Buddha in the world (each "kalpa" or age has a Buddha)

6/ the preaching of the Dharma by that Buddha (i.e. the existence of a teaching or path)

7/ access to the Buddha's teaching

8/ existence of people following the Buddha's teaching

9/ having appropriate companions

Even more rare than a human birth is a birth with the favorable conditions. Therefore the student is told he should think that he is extremely fortunate and should make use of this incredible opportunity to practice the Dharma.

The benefits of a human birth are as follows:

1/ The human birth will give you everything that a Wish-Fulfilling gem will give.

2/ It will help you obtain the position of the Sravakas and Pratyekabuddhas, and

3/ will help you obtain the vision of the great Vajradhara (Buddha).

The Short Duration of the Precious Human Birth

The student is also exhorted to contemplate how short a human life is. He is asked to consider the fact that there can be no real satisfaction in Samsaric life because we have no idea when we will die, and further, we have constantly the knowledge that we most surely will die. Therefore, there is nothing else but the Dharma from the beginning. The idea here is that the only attainment which can reach beyond this short and uncertain existence is Dharma. The only investment which we know we can "cash in" is that in our mind-continuum which determines the nature of our rebirth, and especially which can allow us to escape from Samsara altogether.

The Law of Karma - Cause and Effect

The next phase of teaching is offered while the lungs are still being given. The teaching on "karma" is at the heart of both exoteric and esoteric Buddhist Dharma.

Karma is defined as the "law of cause and result." It is taught that there are essentially three types of acts of body, speech and mind which "build karma":

1/ Virtuous

2/ non-virtuous

3/ neutral

Non-Virtuous Action

As already indicated, there are three classes of actions which may produce karmic result, thus non-virtuous acts arise from these three classes of defilements:

Defilements of the body include:

-killing and suicide
-stealing
-sexual misconduct
-lying

Defilements of the voice include:

-speech which separates people
-abusive speech
-idle speech

Defilements of the mind include:

-covetousness
-harmful thoughts about others
-wrong views

The result of these three defilements is birth in the three lower realms; thus hell beings are destined to "repeat their errors" and to cycle through those existences many times, while pretas will repeat their errors fewer times, and animals the fewest number of times.

Even if we are born a human we will suffer the consequences of non-virtuous acts of body, speech, and mind.

-If we kill, our life is likely to be short
-if we steal we are likely to be poor

-if we engage in sexual misconduct we are likely to have a bad mate

-If we lie we are likely to have a bad reputation

-If we use speech which separates people, we are likely to have few friends.

-if we act in an abusive manner we will be abused

-if we engage in idle speech we will not be believed

-if we are covetous, our wishes will not be fulfilled

-if we think harmful thoughts we will always have fears

-if we hold wrong views, they will lead to other wrong views

Also, if we engage in non-virtuous actions we are born in uncomfortable places, with bad weather and other discomforts, so the initiates are exhorted to think that whatever suffering exists is caused by non-virtuous actions and avoid even small ones.

Virtuous Action

Virtuous actions arise naturally from undefiled thinking. They are the opposite of non-virtuous actions, and because of these actions we are born as a deva. Virtuous actions include:

-not killing which builds karma for a long life

-not stealing which builds karma for being wealthy

-not engaging in sexual misconduct which builds karma for getting a good mate.

-telling only the truth which builds karma for having a good reputation.

-not using separating speech which builds karma for having many friends.

-not acting in an abusive manner which builds karma for our being

treated well, and not being abused.
-not indulging in idle speech which builds karma for being believed.
-not being covetous which builds karma for our wishes being fulfilled
-not thinking harmful thoughts which builds karma for being free of fear.
-holding right views which builds karma for the development of right views.

We are told to think that whatever happiness there is, such as a cold wind in hell, whatever relief there is, arises caused by virtuous action. Therefore we should accumulate virtuous action.

Neutral actions include eating, sleeping, walking, and other actions not arising from either good or bad intentions. Neutral actions produce neither suffering nor happiness.

At all times the initiates are told that they should discard even the smallest non-virtuous actions and accumulate even the smallest virtuous ones.

The Dedication of Merit

It is taught that it is very important to dedicate virtuous actions before their benefit can be destroyed by anger. We dedicate virtuous action by the thought that we are engaging in it in order to attain Buddhahood for the sake of all sentient beings.

This completes the introduction to the Nang Sum or Triple Vision teachings.

Summary and Analysis

In the following pages I shall review the concepts introduced during the first part of the Nang Sum teachings. I are employing here, a similar strategy used by my teacher/informants, though with much less repetition. The following commentary is a synthesis based upon detailed teachings given during Lam Drā with reference to other field experience with a number of other Tibetan initiates and lamas.

The term "Nang Sum" translates as "triple vision." As with so many of these teachings, the metaphor is multi-leveled. Given the limits of the author's understanding as reflected in the ability to ask appropriate questions of my informants, the three parts of the triple vision consist in:

Level One; Impure Vision - this is the vision of ordinary people. It is associated with a cyclical existence (i.e. entrapment on the "Wheel of Life") and with the "precious human birth." This sort of vision invariably produces karma which results in further cyclical existence with the suffering that entails.

Level Two; Experiential Vision - this is the vision of yogis and has two sub-levels. The first is the "ordinary" level and is characterized by loving mind-state, compassion, or Bodhicitta (literally "Buddha-heart," perhaps best translated as "loving-kindness").

The second or "extraordinary" level of Experiential Vision consists in the Vajrayana view, practice, and experience

Level Three; Pure Vision - "The contemplation of the Pure Vision is the contemplation of the unceasing adorned wheel of the enlightened Body, Speech, and Mind."

There are also three aspects of the Nang Sum teachings, consisting in:

1/ The teachings on the faults of Samsara
2/ The teachings on the benefits of the "Precious Human Birth."
3/ The teachings on the law of Karma.

The Nang Sum is described as the lower of the two sections of Lam Drā and hence the relatively exoteric of the two stages of the Lam Drā cycle. With this conception it would be tempting to treat it as the presentation of what I have called the "ordinary tradition" teaching, or mundane level system of dogma. This approach would be in error.

I know of at least one well-respected lama who felt it necessary to do a twelve year cave-retreat in contemplation of the Nang Sum teachings. Clearly my informants, or at least the tantric adepts among them, feel that the Nang Sum is a teaching which "unfolds" to reveal deeper meaning as the result of contemplation and meditation in the same sense as, although perhaps to a lesser degree than, the "higher tantras."

It should be remembered that the student is expected to return to his monastery and begin to practice seriously these teachings from the beginning. In a three year retreat, each section is studied and meditated upon before continuing to the next. Further, my informants say that the "fruits" of a practice must be "obtained" before the initiate progresses to the next one in a sequence. Thus the student has at each phase to be able to convince the lama that he has derived appropriate understanding and experience from a given practice before being given instructions for the next "higher" one.

Further, this study and meditation is supervised by a qualified guru who guides the students' intellectual understanding through an ongoing one to one dialogue. Secondly, and of paramount importance to my informants, the guru is interpreting and guiding the initiate's meditation practice on (at times) a day to day basis. Minimally, the lama is listening and looking for "signs" that a student has obtained the "fruits" of a particular practice. My informants would argue that a lama who is himself a powerful meditator is also able to know "directly" the state of the initiate's mind, and guide him or her accordingly.

Thus we should not take lightly the significance of these "exoteric" teachings for Lam Drā.

Authority, Transmission and the Meaning of Refuge

Lam Drā begins with a presentation of the historical lineage of transmission of the teachings upon which the students are expected to base their lives. Exoterically this attempt to establish the "authority" (a term my informants would use in English) for these teachings is deemed necessary because it must be established that he who originated the teachings was in a position to know truths not available to ordinary individuals, and further it must be established that the route of communication of this information from the originator to the student is unbroken. Were this not the case then invalid information could be wrongly attributed to the authority of the teacher.

Given the propensity of both Indian and Tibetan writers historically to derive authority from possibly mythical high teachers, or attribute the authority for their writings to deities, this seems a reasonable precaution.

Secondly, the line of transmission is important because many of these teachings consist in an oral as well as a written component, and further, that written component usually did not originate with the progenitor of the teachings.

It is also recognized to be the case that the sets of theory and meditation practices have evolved over generations of practitioners and adepts. Should one intermediary have misunderstood the teachings of his predecessors, his commentaries on the practices might be misleading.

These are reasons enough to need to establish the authority for the present transmission. There is however, another and much more pressing need which centers around the Tibetan tantric conception of the nature of initiation itself.

I have suggested that some aspects of religious systems in general and the Tibetan tantric system in particular consist in nested sets of multi-level metaphors such that penetration of one level of meaning may be predicated upon those which are cognitively or experientially precedent to its "unfoldment", and may in turn be precedent for the unfoldment of further levels of meaning. This can be said to be true for every level in this system.

For example, the first practice which one does as a Buddhist is to "take refuge" in the "Buddha, the Dharma, and the

Sangha." We might take this then to be a relatively "low" practice and be tempted to "transmit" our understanding of the practice as relatively complete. As beginning initiates we would quite possibly have been told that the meaning of the refuges are as follows:

1/ The refuge in the Buddha is using the historical Buddha as a protector and teacher, praying to him, and receiving his "blessings" or "protection".

2/ The refuge in the Dharma is taking refuge in the doctrine of one's particular school of Buddhism, or in one particular doctrine.

3/ The refuge in the Sangha can be seen as taking refuge in the monastic community.

When one begins serious study however, it is likely that one's teacher will elaborate the meaning of the refuge teachings somewhat. It is likely that more of the "inner meaning" (a term my informants use frequently) will be revealed. The following is an example.

1/ The refuge in the Buddha is a refuge in the idea that it is possible for a being to "awaken." It is a refuge in the teaching that all beings are a part of the awakening process, that all beings are evolving toward Buddhahood. Thus we take refuge in the "stream of awakened consciousness which is the Buddha nature."

Secondly, since it is taught that all beings have a "Buddha nature," we are really taking refuge in our own true nature for if we were not already Buddha in our basic nature it would be impossible for us to become Buddhas. So in taking refuge in the Buddha, we are taking refuge in the fact that we can realize the true nature of mind, and that in fact we are increasingly unfolding in our realization as is every living thing.

Finally, it is also taught that in seeking Buddhahood we are "seeking to complete that which is already completed." Buddhahood is beyond time and space and yet because we are deluded by the illusion of time and space we seek to "become Buddhas." One cannot become that which it eternal and unchanging. Buddhahood is already attained and yet we continue to suffer the illusion of suffering because we have not awakened to our real state. The illusion that we can become anything is one of our greatest hindrances. Thus in taking refuge in Buddha we relinquish hope and fear for only when these attachments are relinquished can the true nature of mind arise in awareness.

2/ The refuge in the Dharma is at one level a refuge in a pile of religious books. The Sanskrit word "Dharma" and Pali word "Dhamma" may best be translated not as "religious doctrine," but rather as "form." A religious teaching can be called Dharma but so can a dance, a song, a thanka (painting), or a physical object like a statue, or a pile of refuse. By taking refuge in form we recognize that while the higher realms of existence are formless, and especially Buddha is formless, we who know our consciousness only through its objects must work with form as the vehicle of our evolution.

The Heart Sutra states:

> "Form is Emptiness, Emptiness is Form"

This passage is meant to convey the higher teaching on the nature of mind. At first we explore the reality of apparently inherently existing objects, and we find that everything we see about us, including other people, and ourselves, is composite in nature and that the mind makes "things" out of sets of experience. With practice we come to realize that the real nature of all things is truly "emptiness."

At a higher level however, we also come to realize that the nature of phenomena is not static and that all things are coming to be and passing away. In fact the above quote from the Heart Sutra is better translated as:

"Forming is Emptying, Emptying is Forming."

We cannot then say that the nature of being is emptiness, nor can we say that it is form. Rather we must say that all phenomena are both emptiness (Sunyata) and form. The enlightenment experience consists in part in the simultaneous experience of form and emptiness, an experience which would embody contradiction for the deluded mind, but which does not embody contradiction for the awakened mind.

So when we take refuge in the Dharma we are taking refuge in the idea that through form we can come to realize emptiness and through the realization of emptiness we can come to realize the nature of being as both emptiness and form.

3/ The refuge in the Sangha at one level is refuge in appropriate companions but there are other aspects of refuge. One is also taking refuge in the Aryan Sangha i.e. in the community of all beings who are trying to awaken. This can mean spiritual confrères but can also be understood in the context of the understanding that all beings, even every blade of grass, are awakening and that all will eventually attain Buddhahood. So one is taking refuge in the idea, and eventually in the realization, that all phenomena are already Buddha; one is at this very moment part of a "Buddha field" and one with that Dharma.

Also of course is the refuge in the High Sangha, the corporate and non-corporate Sangha consisting of beings who have awakened and have chosen to take form in order to help sentient beings to awaken.

As we can see then, it is not merely necessary for those beings in the line of transmission to have heard and recorded the teachings, it is necessary for them to have fully understood them at all levels of meaning. This is why, for example, the title of "translator" is considered to be a very high one when applied to Dharma material. One must translate not merely the words, or one level of meaning, but must be able to translate all levels of meaning including those which are esoteric. Further, such an individual must be able to re-code that meaning within another set of culturally and linguistically appropriate multi-levelled metaphors. From this perspective, a "translator" must "unfold" as set of teachings in his or her own awareness, and must in effect, compose a new set of teachings which are idiomatically appropriate in a new linguistic and cultural context.

There are a further two concepts relevant to the Tibetan concept of initiation, and therefore relevant to the need to establish authority for the present transmission. These are the concept of "realization" and allied to it in this case, the concept of "direct transmission".

As I have already suggested, this system is self-consciously predicated upon the notion that "ordinary" awareness constitutes a less valid apprehension of the nature of being than does "extraordinary" awareness. Of the latter, there are many levels, each incomprehensible within the cognitive framework of the one preceding it.

When we apply this conceptualization of the nature of "understanding" to multi-leveled metaphors such as these practices purport to be, then it is clear that transmission of a set of teachings requires that the individual who serves as vehicle must have fully "unfolded" the teachings in question. It follows that where the teachings are supposed to be a vehicle whereby enlightenment may be attained, the individual must himself be enlightened. Thus the spiritual credentials of the transmitting lamas are crucial.

Finally, and à propos the above, is the idea of "direct transmission." This is the belief (discussed in greater detail later) that individuals, especially those of great spiritual attainment, are able to transmit etherially a pattern of meaning or experience such that an appropriately sensitive student or fellow adept may share a particular mental pattern without other forms of communication being required. From this perspective, the ritual strategies and meditation practices and so on, used in the attempt to produce the experience in the average initiate, are unnecessary, or at least of less importance in transmitting the understanding from a lama who is a "powerful meditator" to a student who is optimally receptive.

The lama's direct transmission is seen as indispensible for the initiates' unfoldment of a tantric practice. It is important not only that the lama be a powerful meditator but also that the student be receptive and be able to unfold the initiation.

From this perspective then, it is important that during each transmission of the teachings in the line between the originator and the present transmission both the holders and the receivers of the transmission were sufficiently adept such that no distortion in meaning or efficacy was introduced.

Postures of Body and Mind

After the initial authority for the present transmission is established basic instructions are given for comportment during the Lam Drā. Postures of both body and mind are discussed in some detail.

At this point the first meditation practice was introduced. This was the refuge visualization and it warrants detailed examination.

Firstly, the reader will note that the student's instructed to transmute mentally his present physical environment into a place "filled with saphire, very comfortable and flat." The dominant aspect here is homogenization of the present visual array into one consisting mainly of color, and secondarily of uniform texture. Whatever the number and variety of objects in one's visual environment, one mentally creates a surround of multi-faceted blue light (reminiscent of the "fish egg" experience to be discussed later). As will be evident from the description in the next chapter of "tranquility meditation," the blue color, and the saphire texture, are associated with calm steadiness of mind, and tranquility.

Having created a symbolic field characterized mainly by steadiness of focus and tranquility, the initiate is instructed to create in front of himself a wish-fulfilling tree. As has already been indicated in the teachings so far, the focus of tantra is upon the "precious human body" as the only vehicle whereby enlightenment may be attained. As will become evident later on in my discussion of the more advanced teachings, tantric technique invariably consists of coded sets of instructions to the body.

The tree, I would argue, is meant to act as a body symbol, the trunk representing the spine. In that tree the initiate is told to visualize a lotus flower with four petals. The lotus flower is used as a symbol of unfolding energy; it is an opening of a previously closed system of energy ("energy" in this case referring to the individuals' phenomenology concomitant to underlying change in a system). The student then is symbolizing the body, with a symbol of unfoldment or opening placed in the middle of that body. Based on other sets of instructions I have received, I would suggest that the four petalled lotus in the refuge tree is placed at the "heart center" which corresponds to the neural plexus at the chest level.

So far then, we have a symbolic array calculated to produce a state of steady tranquility in the midst of which is introduced a symbol for one's body combined with that which produces a sense of opening at the heart center.

In the middle of the lotus is placed a lion throne, a seat supported by two lions. On the throne is seated one's guru or spiritual teacher in the form of the deity Vajradhara. So what the lotus is opening to is the Vajradhara aspect of the guru seated on a throne of power. It is interesting to note that the lions of the eight lion throne represent the eight kinds of society.

The deity is colored dark blue which for Tibetan tantrists represents the element "space". In his right hand he holds a five pointed "vajra" also called a "dorje" and in his left hand he holds a golden bell.

The deity is filled with "space" - with "no-form." Thus no-form or emptiness is embodied within the form of the deity. This theme is repeated again and elaborated by the objects he holds.

The vajra is a symbol for the creative aspect of mind; it is a term which is also used as a euphemism for penis, and which also means "thunderbolt." In the right hand, i.e. emanating from the side of the body which is associated with the male principle, the active aspect of being is held the symbol for the synthesis of the active or creative aspect of mind.

The bell is a symbol for the empty aspect of mind, for pure consciousness, or consciousness without an object, - Sunyata. Tibetan tantrists see the sound of the bell as coming from emptiness, having the illusion of tangibility, and then returning to emptiness. It also represents liminality, the coming into being and passing away of phenomena. The bell then is representative of the "plenum void," that from which all phenomena arise which is itself empty of form. It is held in the left hand emanating from the side of the body which is associated with the female principle, the plenum void.

Most importantly, Vajradhara's hands are crossed and they are crossed at his chest: the symbol for the aspect of form and that for the aspect of pure consciousness are linked in the crossing of the arms, in the placing of each symbol in correspondence with the side of the body representing its antithesis. And this linking takes place at the heart center. This is representative of the inseparability of form and emptiness which is part of the higher teachings to be discussed later.

The initiate then is opening to embody the Vajradhara deity aspect of the guru seated on a throne of power who is in turn opening to and embodying emptiness and form, or pure consciousness and the consciousness of form, and who embodies the inseparability of form and emptiness.

At this stage in the teachings the student is visualizing what the Tibetan tantrists call "front arising" i.e. the visualization is seen as separate from and in front of the student. Thus the student is somewhat distanced from the states of being represented within the refuge tree visualization.

The deity/guru is seated in the same posture as the initiate and is "adorned" with all the major and minor saints, and is surrounded by the lineage gurus.

On the front petal of the lotus, and in the physical position of intermediary i.e. between the initiate and the deity which represents the enlightened mind-state is Sri Hevajra, the primary deity in the Lam Drä ritual cycle. On the opposite side of Vajradhara are huge piles of Dharma books, perhaps representing the teachings at one pole, with Hevajra as their realization, or direct experience on the other pole.

On the right petal of the lotus (the initiate's left side) is visualized the historical Buddha surrounded by all other Buddhas (i.e. of the ten directions.) The historical Buddha, the student will later learn, is no longer in their realm of form and so is quite inaccessible to the student. He is placed in association with the female, plenum void, emptiness/Sunyata, the formless side of the body of the initiate.

On the left petal of the lotus is the "Bodhisattva Sangha" also referred to as the "high Sangha." A Bodhisattva is a being who has attained liberation but instead of entering the state of Nirvana has remained in Samsara (the relative existence of ordinary beings) to help all sentient beings to attain liberation too. The Bodhisattva is somewhat more accessible to the initiate than is the historical Buddha because the Bodhisattva has chosen to remain in the realm of suffering in order to be accessible.

Thus on a North - South axis we see a continuum of accessibility as well as type of access from the Dharma books representing intellectual understanding to Hevajra representing full realization. On the East - West axis a continuum is described from form to formless.

Next the initiate visualizes his mother (and correspondingly the basis for his own female aspect) standing on his left or female side and his father (or basis for his own male aspect) standing on the right or male side. In front one visualizes all sentient beings with one's enemies closest to the refuge.

From a Buddhist point of view the primary obstacle to the realization of Buddha is the illusion of an inherently existing self. It is therefore considered necessary to dissolve that conception. Placing one's enemies at the head of beings taking refuge may represent a challenge to the notion of self in that one's enemies, more than any other group, delineate the boundaries of self. Placing all sentient beings ahead of oneself is consistent with the Bodhisattva ideal that one is seeking enlightenment for the benefit of all sentient beings.

Consistent with and as reinforcement for the theoretical teachings about the nature and causes of suffering offered earlier, the student meditates upon the endless suffering that all beings in Samsara must endure unless they take the "fruit" being offered to them.

The student reflects that the gods are in Samsara themselves and so are an imperfect refuge. This reflection is an attempt to counter the notion that seeking power, even spiritual or meditative power, can provide refuge, for the gods are very powerful and yet are still subject to suffering and still create karma.

The student then reaffirms the validity of the refuge, reflecting on both its power and its compassion aspects. Maintaining this sentiment and imagery, he then imagines that all sentient beings are taking refuge with him.

The illusion of self is necessarily contingent upon a false dichotomy which includes "other." The goal of tantra is to enable the individual to overcome dichotomous conceptualization. Therefore this final part of the refuge visualization unites self and other in refuge.

The student is instructed to maintain the visualization and chant the refuge prayer until he has "signs." Specifically mentioned are one's hair standing on end, and tears beginning to fall.

If we accept the premise that the sadhana is a map for a state of mind/body it is entirely reasonable that a combination of phenomenological and physical changes would accompany attainment of that state. One might suggest that the state in question is "merely" one of extreme emotionality; however, such a state is one where the openness symbolized by the lotus and other motifs in visualization is likely to exist. In the state where one's hair stands on end or when one's tears are falling freely it is unlikely that psychological distance from the visualization is being maintained. More likely, the individual has internalized the symbolic array and is phenomenologically identified with it.

At this critical point where the individual is maximally identified with the refuge visualization and is internalizing that process the next stage in the sadhana begins.

The initiate visualizes rays of light emanating from all the Buddhas touching all beings and dispersing all obstacles or defilements (which prevent the realization of Buddhahood). The light acts to transmute all beings into Buddhas and they "fly like birds to the Buddha realms." Thus are the mainstays for the illusion of self transmuted into Buddha.

In the visualization discussed in the preceding pages, the various components of the visualization gradually dissolve into light and are absorbed into the deity/guru. Thus the deity/guru embodies all of the divers elements of the visualization.

Then the deity dissolves into light which enters our body through the top of the initiate's head. The light, the essence of the entire visualization, fills the body of the initiate and becomes inseparable from him.

At this point, having identified himself completely with the visualization, the initiate is instructed to cease visualization and meditate for a period.

Having articulated a mind-state through the vehicle of the sadhana, the student "abides" in that state as long as possible.

The initiates are of course instructed to do this refuge meditation often and always to do it as a preparation for other meditation practices at the beginning of any meditation session. At the beginning of a long meditation retreat (e.g. often 40 days, or up to six months for ordinary initiates) the student is often instructed to spend several days, or perhaps longer for some individuals, taking refuge.

Clearly this sadhana or one similar to it is seen as instrumental in the production of a mind-state conducive to the efficacious use of further sadhana. Additionally of course we must consider that from my informants' point of view, the refuge practice if fully comprehended in all of its depth of meaning by the initiate would in itself be sufficient for awakening.

The reader is cautioned that my elucidation above is far from exhaustive but is offered for purposes of illustration. From the expressed perspective of my teacher/informants, only if the author could generate in his own experience the full unfoldment of this sadhana could he exhaustively elaborate its meaning. Even then it is likely that only another who had had the experience would be able to follow the chain of metaphors which he would be forced to employ.

Wang Kur as Latent Seed

The reader will also note that during this first part of Lam Drā wang kurs were offered without any instructions for meditation, for example the initiation to Panashavati given to protect our health during the teachings. Since I have just demonstrated that sadhana involves the initiates' elaborate manipulation of imagery in meditation it would seem at first that these initiations, and many more during Lam Drā are being given "pro forma" rather than as active components in the ritual cycle. In truth, it would appear that for most initiates these wangs are not *phenomenologically* active. That is to say, the initiate does not have meditative experiences during or as an identifiable aftermath of the wang (I shall qualify this statement shortly). However, rather than obviating the significance of the wang, this lack of instructions and, in fact, often a lack of suggestion that the initiate practice the relevant meditation, points to another two important aspects of wang kur initiation, that of "blessing" or "direct transmission," and that of "depth consciousness."

The former term refers to the notion that a lama who has "clear" and "powerful" meditation emanates the pattern of meaning generated in his meditation in such a manner as to effect the consciousness of other beings whether or not they are aware of this effect. The metaphor which is used is that of "planting a seed" through wang kur. The seed changes the consciousness if not the awareness of the initiate.

This is not to suggest that practice is seen as unimportant. To the contrary the metaphor which is used is that of "watering the seed" which the lama has planted. However with a complex ritual cycle such as this one, many wangs will be given as "minor blessings" for their beneficial and preparatory effect upon the individual.

Further, I must qualify the statement that profound experiences do not usually arise as the result of wang kur without practice. If fact, many initiates do report that a wang kur given by a very powerful lama can produce intense experiences either during or as an aftermath of wang kur, or both. For example, when the much venerated Kalu Rinpoche gives the wrathful Mahakala Puja, initiates report seeing flames around his body, and report profound kinesthetic experiences as well.

Often too, a student who felt nothing in particular during a wang will report having a particularly lucid and apparently relevant dream that night (more on this later).

I shall discuss the concept of direct transmission in more detail somewhat later.

Several other aspects of the Nang Sum teachings outlined here require elucidation. In the order in which they will be discussed, these include the reading of lung, the triple reading of Ti, the teachings on dukka or suffering, including the hell states, the teaching on compassion, the concept of karma, and the concept of dedication of merit.

Lung - the Textual Transmission

First regarding the necessity of receiving lung for a text prior to studying that text. The lung serves of course to maintain the authority of the religious institution over knowledge. One of my informants remarked that Tibetan children require a lung for the alphabet before they study it. While this has a comical aspect when we think in terms of North American education, we must remember that from a Tibetan point of view the Tibetan alphabet is composed of "seed syllables," each of which has esoteric significance as well as its exoteric aspect.

The lung is clearly a link between the initiate and the lineage and is considered to be a spiritual or esoteric link as well as a secular one. It is considered to be important that the text has "passed the lips" of a qualified lama in the presence of the initiate. One might speculate that this appropriate reading of the text is functional in several ways. First, the student is forced to hear the text in its entirety prior to studying it piecemeal, and secondly the first exposure to the text is within the context of "small behaviors" including especially linguistic nuances which characterize the reading of the text by one who has had extensive teaching and perhaps "realization" of the full range of its meaning.

Thus the student hears not merely the words, but receives complex information regarding the significance and meaning of the text. The lama's tone of voice, speed of reading, pauses to chuckle at certain passages, obvious sense of gravity while reading others, and so on, indicate to the student which parts of the text must be studied in great detail, which are levity on part of the authors, which parts are less significant detail, and which parts must be studied very carefully.

Further, we must remember that a great many Tibetan monks were illiterate when these practices came into being, and in fact a large percentage of the monks in India are still illiterate or limited in their ability to read. It is probably an aid for such individuals to have first heard the text before attempting to decipher it themselves.

Finally, the concept of lamaistic direct transmission is clearly implicated again.

Ti - Instructions for Practice

The Ti or textual transmission of instructions for practice is read three times by His Holiness. As with lung, the transmission aspect of this practice is present. My informants explained that since so many Tibetan monks were unable to read, and probably would not have ready access to these texts even if they could, it was necessary to ensure that they would remember the teachings through multiple presentation.

We must remember that these texts consist in sets of instructions which must be available to the practitioner in order to practice the Lam Drā. If the texts are not in memory there may be no other avenue of access. Traditionally Tibetan monks have trained in the memorization of lengthy texts. In fact it is often considered undesirable to have memorized a text prior to studying its meaning. Thus it is at least plausible that a trained monk could memorize a text by third hearing.

Additionally of course, the fact that the text is read three times communicates to the initiate its importance as a central text as does the fact that it is read by the root guru in his most formal aspect wearing the lineage crown.

Dukka - the Teaching on Suffering

The teachings on Dukka or suffering are seen as aids to the initiate's practice for several reasons.

Most obviously, continued contemplation of the various types of sufferings inherent in all composite states of being is likely to "produce disgust with Samsara" leading the student to reject the world of the senses as a refuge.

Further, the various realms of existence, hell states, animal realms, human, deva, and asura may also serve as metaphors for states of being within the immediate experience of the initiate. Any student has doubtless experienced the suffering of the hungry ghost at one time or another. And who has not had the Deva experience of temporary paradise giving rise to its own particularly poignant suffering through the knowledge that this too must pass?

Bodhicitta - the Teaching on Loving Kindness

The teaching on compassion is very complex and multi-levelled. First of all, there is no way to translate adequately the term Bodhicitta (literally "Buddha Heart"). The term denotes a state of empathy and a state of identification with not merely other humans, or other creatures, but also with all phenomena. Such a mind-state is likely to result in compassionate action of course, but compassion in the sense of a cognitive experience does not exhaust the meaning of the term. Bodhicitta is also translated by Tibetans as meaning "loving kindness." Again actions which are expressive of "loving kindness" and "compassion" quite naturally arise from the mind-state being described, but there is about Bodhicitta a dispassionate connotation as well. At the most concrete level of meaning, in a discussion of the Christian concept of compassion, one of my informants argued that Bodhicitta toward other beings is almost a contradiction in terms.

He suggested that we do not speak about having compassion toward our arms, or legs, we do not consider ourselves to be compassionate when we suffer from a stomach ache; so for one who has realized the nature of being that which appears to deluded beings to be compassion is merely a response as to a belly-ache!

More abstractly, Bodhicitta is a mind-state which embraces all phenomena, it is a sense of the suffering inherent in all composite phenomena.

Karma - the Connecting Principle

The "karma formulas" linking acts to forms of reincarnation may similarly be understood as links between present and future mind-states. My Tibetan informants accept that this is the case but would add that there also are such beings as are described in the teachings on the realms of existence. When we remind ourselves that from the Buddhist tantric point of view all forms exist in only relative terms, this set of ideas becomes somewhat clearer.

Let us begin with the intermediate stage between lifetimes, between forms. This stage between death and rebirth is referred to as the "bardo" stage. To simplify a very complex set of teachings, when a being enters the bardo after his mind-continuum becomes disassociated with the body (i.e. when he dies) his karma, the pattern of mind which is the result of his actions of body, speech and mind in the previous lifetime, as well as vestiges of karma from past lifetimes, attracts him to a new form appropriate for his karma or pattern of psychic inertia.

Thus greed results in the being taking form as a preta, or perhaps as a human whose life situation and/or psychological predispositions are such that he endures preta-like suffering, or one who has misused sexuality might take form as the sort of being likely to make choices which result in having an undesirable or painful relationship with a mate. As I stated earlier in discussing the hell states, it is the karmic propensity of body, speech and mind which is the result of previous actions of body, speech and mind which causes the individual to "make the choices," consciously and unconsciously (i.e. systemically) which cause more suffering.

Except for the reincarnation motif, this sort of model is not dissimilar from the psychiatric concept of "neurosis". The neurotic individual, without being cognizant of the fact, typically creates his or her own suffering and will go to great lengths to maintain a neurosis.

Further, the psychotherapeutic model typically employs reference to psychodynamics which are not represented in the being's awareness, save in consequence. I explained the rudiments of several western psychoanalytic theories to lama informants who expressed surprise that westerners understood at least some of this aspect of Dharma!

The Tibetan Tantrist would criticize western psychotherapy on several grounds. First, western psychotherapy has few, and rather weak, therapeutic vehicles. From the tantrika's point of view, the power of the lama's blessing, along with regular and powerful sadhana practiced by one whose mind has been properly trained in full-time meditation, supported by an elaborate body of hermeneutics, within a community of practitioners who have access to much more advanced practitioners, comprises a much more powerful methodological toolkit than that available to western psychiatric patients.

The tantrika would question too the benchmark by which neurosis is judged. Western psychology generally considers "sanity" to be the mean level of neurosis for the culture. The tantrika on the other hand equates sanity with a complete absence of neurosis (conceptualized as conditioned awareness) or enlightenment.

Consider also, the term bardo, which most western students, and novice Tibetan students, equate solely with the after death states. In fact the term is also used to denote the transition between the passing away of one thought and the arising of another.

With extensive questioning, my informants made it clear that they conceive of the process of being as concatenated sets of comings into being and passings away. At the minutest levels of analysis (to be discussed later when I describe higher tantras) processes arise and pass away such as to produce higher level phenomena such as thoughts and feelings which may give rise to coarser phenomena such as speech and action, which in turn interact cybernetically with both lower and higher semiotic structures such that each thought and action is predicated upon those which precede and accompany it and has causal implications for those to follow.

My informants describe a "nesting" of processes, ranging from relatively "fine" to relatively "coarse," interconnected within a cybernetically structured "whole system." Thus relatively fine sub-conscious predispositions have consequences in somewhat coarser patterns of thought which have consequences in patterns of action which have various coarser physical and social consequences. At every level the consequences are seen as cyclical. For example the initiate is told that acting in an abusive manner produces karma such that he is likely to be abused.

My informants suggest that not only does the individual's karma produce the predicted result, but that the result feeds back into the cycle such that more negative karma is produced.

For example the individual's sub-conscious psychic propensities result in behaviour which alienates other people such that the individual perceives himself to be rejected and abused, and responds to that perceived ill treatment with more abusive behaviour, producing still more "bad karma."

It is suggested that with concerted effort the individual can break out of the karmic cycle. Generally though it is felt that previous karma must be "worked out," that is to say, it cannot simply be extinguished. The individual may become free by consciously taking steps to cease to produce karma, by avoiding the "non-virtuous acts" and performing the "virtuous" ones.

"Non-virtuous" or "wrong actions of body, speech, and mind" then, mean acts which have impact upon the beings "mind-continuum" such that "good" (i.e. leading toward enlightenment) or "bad" (i.e. leading toward further entrapment in Samsara) karma is produced. From this perspective, punishment and reward are completely automatic and unavoidable consequences of the individual's actions at the relatively coarse level of body, the somewhat finer level of speech, or the succeedingly finer levels of mind.

Just as patterns of subtle and coarse action produce further patterns of action, so such sets of patterns produce patterns at the macro level of mind-continuum. Hence the system of thought represented by the teachings on karma sees the individual as an emergent phenomenon, a process which is the outcome of karmic patterns characterized by micro and macro levels of arisings and passings away of phenomena.

The illusion of an inherently existing contiguous self is seen as the major obstacle to the being's awareness of his own composite and non contiguous nature. It is the illusion of self which is responsible for the individual's perception of the relatively macro transition of death as a transition, and more importantly, as a terminal transition.

Thus for the tantric adept death, the passing away of phenomena, is a moment to moment event. The process of being consisting in countless deaths and rebirths in an endless cycle, some more noticeable than others, some like the passing away of the physical form noticed even by beings of limited awareness.

The adepts with whom I have consulted assert that with the development of awareness of the process of being, the constant deaths and rebirths which constitute one's particular karmic pattern, one also comes to see the death transition within the broader perspective of a continuous cycle.

Just as one has experienced the beginning and end of countless days, countless meals, countless states of mind, so has one experienced the beginning and end of countless bodies. This is just one more, the continuation or passing away of which has significance only in terms of its usefulness in attaining escape from the endless multi-levelled cycle of death and rebirth - enlightenment.

Sharing the Merit

The student is advised to "dedicate the merit" derived through the sadhana before it can be destroyed. It is explained that even a moment of anger can destroy the merit of even a very good session. Therefore, we are advised to "save it" by dedicating the merit of this practice "to the benefit of all sentient beings."

This is also referred to as "sharing the merit," and is of course consistent with the Bodhisattva ideal.

One might also suggest that the sharing of merit may function as a symbolic "sealing off" of the sacred experience. It is my experience, and one which is confirmed by my non-adept informants, that the mind-state upon completing deep-meditation is experienced as somewhat fragile and volatile. An experienced meditator can create, or engender, a practice characterized by what my informants have referred to as "firm abiding," experienced as considerable stability in the meditative state.

This is perhaps the first level of meditative skill. However, at least for less skillful meditators, the period after sadhana is one of emotional vulnerability. Having just had the experience which most meditators describe with terms like "crystalline," "clear," and "unblemished," the initiate is likely to react rather strongly and negatively to the arising in awareness of negative thoughts and emotions. My informants confirm that one danger is that the student, seeing negative mind-states arising against the backdrop of the recently experienced deep calm of meditation, will react with disgust or despair at having "lost" the meditation mind-state.

Dedicating the merit, thereby "saving" that benefit serves then not merely to reinforce the Bodhisattva ideal, but also to "seal off" the deep meditation experience from the individual's ordinary experience.

Samsara and Nirvana

The teaching on Samsara and Nirvana has so far tended to focus upon the nature of Samsara as suffering. An apparent dichotomy has been articulated with Samsara, the world of suffering, the realm of delusion, the consciousness of conditioned awareness, etc. as the negative and undesirable state, and Nirvana the state of pure mind, non-conditioned awareness, freedom as the positive, desirable, and attainable state through the practice of Lam Drã.

As we shall see shortly, this apparent opposition is resolved with recourse to the teachings on the nature of mind.

Toward A Tantric Ecology of Mind

> "It is cold and damp, we are very crowded, my cushion has disappeared, my knees hurt, I am coughing from the incense, my chang is cold, and there is a fly floating in it"
> (personal field-note)

The second stage of the Nang Sum or "Triple Vision" teachings continue with much the same daily routine. Most of most days are occupied with Lungs.

The day begins at 7:30 a.m. or as late as 8:30 a.m. with a "mandala offering" (to be discussed in detail later).

Commonly, at about nine o'clock a tea offering is made. When all of the tea is poured into our eight hundred cups from large aluminum pitchers, first to the Rinpoche who is giving the Lung, then to ~~the other high~~ Lamas in order of status, and finally to the assembly of monks and lay people, the Rinpoche stops reading and takes a sip of his tea. At this point we also may begin to drink.

It is with good reason that most lamas of my acquaintance have teacups with covers. By the time all tea is poured, and appropriate chanting is finished, the liquid is often cold.

Tibetan tea is made by adding a chunk of chinese brick tea to boiling water, followed by a handful of butter, and liberal quantity of salt. Traditionally the mixture is churned in a device reminiscent of a butter-churn. The result is one for which a taste must be acquired. Even so, few westerners are able to tolerate more than a cup or two of the oily fluid.

When cold, and having been instrumental in the demise of several insects, it can be a most unpleasant beverage. Generally however it is bad form to throw out an offering. As well, there is little opportunity to dispose of cold "chang." If one does not consume the liquid before the next offering (they come with increasing frequency as Lam Drā progresses) one will have to mix the two. Since the next offering may be the cheaper Indian tea laden with sugar and milk, this situation is best avoided.

The negativism which the teachings on suffering had inspired or, at least increased, has largely disappeared. I write in my personal field-notes:

> "My anger has largely disappeared now and I am beginning to appreciate again what a privilege this is. To be able to receive these high initiations from lamas like Chogye Rinpoche who have spent lifetimes in study and meditation is an incredible opportunity."

Love

The teachings begin to discriminate among states and substates of mind beginning with those on love and compassion.

The initiate is instructed to think of his mother, and her kindness and selfless love and teaching. He must think that because of her kindness we have been able to come to Buddhism, meet the Guru, and receive the Lam Drā teachings. After pondering her kindness, the initiate should wish her happiness and the causes of happiness and dedicate his virtues to do something. He should wish "may my mother have happiness and the causes of happiness."

Next the initiate must think that just wishing this to happen will not be sufficient. Therefore we must pray to the guru - imagine that the space in from to you is filled with the guru and pray ~~to him~~ to bless your mother.

Next we apply this same thinking and request for blessing to our father, and finally to our relatives and friends.

The initiate ponders that these beings have not only been kind in this life, but have been our mother in many lives. For this reason we wish them happiness and the cause of happiness.

Next the initiate ponders the fact that even our present enemies, and those with whom we have bitter relations have been our mothers in countless lifetimes and have done us great kindness. Therefore we wish our enemies happiness and the cause of happiness. Finally we do the same for all sentient beings.

The initiate then resolves to do something to enable all beings to have happiness.

Compassion

We are told to begin the work on compassion with the wish that all beings shall be free of suffering.

Three kinds of compassion are outlined as follows:

1/ Compassion directed to sentient beings
2/ Compassion directed to Dharma
3/ Compassion without an object

Compassion directed to sentient beings

To develop the first type of compassion we use generally the same procedure as we used to develop love. The difference is that the initiate not only wishes his mother, his father, his relatives, friends, enemies, and all sentient beings happiness and the cause of happiness, he also wishes that they shall be free of suffering and the sins which are the cause of suffering.

The initiate is instructed to think that the enemy is actually his mother but because of changing lives he doesn't recognize him. The enemy's evil actions are the result of delusion, and will lead to a lower birth and greater suffering for the being. Therefore we should feel compassion for that being and should dedicate our virtues to him.

We are instructed to meditate upon compassion in this manner for all sentient beings whose delusions lead to constant suffering, especially those with greater suffering like the hell creatures.

Compassion directed to Dharma

For developing compassion directed to Dharma the initiate is directed to think that all sentient beings suffer in Samsara because they don't know the real nature of all things. For this reason we wish them to have this knowledge.

Compassion directed to Dharma is divided into two categories as follows:

1/ "wishing enlightenment thought"
2/ "entering enlightenment thought"

To develop the "wishing enlightenment thought" the initiate is instructed to think that just wishing will not help sentient beings, so he should seek someone like a Buddha, and should wish to attain Buddhahood so that all beings may be freed from the ocean of Samsara. Therefore the initiate thinks " for the sake of all sentient beings I will attain Buddhahood."

To develop the "entering enlightenment thought" the individual should think that "just as I desire happiness, all beings desire happiness, and just as I desire to be apart from suffering all beings desire to be apart from suffering. So he wishes that all will gain happiness and be apart from suffering.

Blue Flower Meditation

After these teachings, and beginning on the next night, another meditation practice is taught. This is the "blue flower" meditation.

The initiates are instructed to construct an artificial flower, colored blue, with a width of "one hand" (about 4"). The flower is colored light blue and is lighter colored toward the edge. We are instructed to place the flower on a stick at about three and one half feet away from us, at about nose level.

The initiate should not open his eyes very wide, and should not close the eyes either. Further he should not move the eyes "because there are veins of thoughts in the eyes" (he means this in the physical sense). We are instructed to set the eyes in one place, i.e. in the general direction of the flower, and rest the mind naturally and without strain or effort "as on a flower."

Especially, the initiate is advised not to "grasp" at "anything such as shape or color."

Without making any effort the initiate is instructed to let the mind stay in that position. Once we rest the mind upon the flower, we are advised not to produce any thoughts - when the mind and the flower are inseparable, no thoughts are produced. If the mind wanders, the initiate is instructed to gently bring it back to the object of meditation just as at the beginning of the meditation session.

The initiates are instructed regarding a taxonomy of experiences which may arise as a result of this meditation:

- steady
- steadier
- used to steadiness
- calm and firm
- complete firmness

We are advised that one can produce these experiences in different orders. The initiate should not become excited when the experiences are produced, but should relax the mind and try to recognize and seek the method to make the mind steady.

It is explained to the initiates that it is essential to have good meditational tranquility because it is the first step on the Vajrayana path.

The Four Authorities

The topic of the authority of the teachings is revisited at this stage. It is explained that there are four "authorities" of the Lam Drä which make it better than other teachings:

-" Buddha's speech
- its commentary
- good masters
- experience"

It is explained that if the authority of "experience" is missing then the others will not arise. Therefore the student should produce a good meditation upon tranquility so that it will be easier to produce later paths or meditations.

The Five Faults of Practice in Meditation and the Eight Antidotes

The next teaching is another relating to meditation skills. The initiates must learn to recognize the "five faults of practice in meditation" and must learn to apply the appropriate antidotes.

The following faults are outlined:

1/ Boredom and laziness

2/ We are interested but forget our instructions - therefore the mind is not clear.

3/ We remember the instructions but the mind is sunk inwardly or wanders outwardly.

4/ When the preceeding faults arise, we don't seek an antidote to dispel them.

5/ When the mind is not sunk or distracted, instead of resting it upon the main object, we have in mind that it is too great an effort to find the antidote.

Next are outlined the "Eight Antidotes:

1/ Intention - as in having a firm intention to practice

2/ Making the effort to practice

3/ Faith in meditation (e.g. as a worthwhile vehicle)

4/ Making the mind and body at ease with meditation

5/ Mindfullness of the meditation instructions

6/ Maintaining awareness of the movement of mind (i.e. thoughts)

7/ Seeking an antidote when the mind is sunk or distracted

8/ When the mind is no longer sunk or distracted, just relax without further efforts.

Meditation Upon transcendental Insight

Having completed for the time being the basic instructions on meditational technique, the metaphysical basis for Lam Drā is elucidated. The following set of contemplations also act to tie together the threads of theory and practice which have been taught thus far.

There are three divisions of the Meditation upon transcendental insight as taught here:

1/ Establishing (i.e. proving) all appearances to be mind

2/ Establishing mind to be illusion

3/ Establishing the nature of that illusion to be inexpressable.

The following sub-premises are offered in support of the above premises.

1/ Establishing (i.e. proving) all appearances to be mind

All appearances arise because our own mind is deluded - otherwise there is nothing external which exists as true. One should decide this and rest the mind on this thought.

2/ Establishing mind to be illusion

The mind does not exist as true. For example a magician can utter mantras and change objects into horses and elephants, but people not under the influence of the magician will not see horses and elephants.

Similarly, from beginningless time the mind has been deluded by residues of previous experiences. When conditioned causes appear they cause the residues. Appearances (all appearances) are like illusion and dream. The student should believe this firmly and rest the mind on this thought.

3/ Establishing the nature of that illusion to be inexpressable.

The reason behind appearances is known only by the Buddha. Like the feather of the peacock they have a complex set of causes.

Therefore the cause of appearances is inexpressable. The student should rest the mind on this thought.

In support of the above premises, three stages of practice are outlined.

1/ The first is the stage of "dispelling non-virtuous thought and producing virtuous thought."

The student is instructed to meditate on:

-the faults of Samsara,
-the benefits of the precious human birth,
-the law of karma,
-love and compassion.

2/ The second stage is that of "dispelling the mind which grasps all things to be true." It is explained that in order to be free of Samsara we must know the main cause of Samsara which is "grasping."

Grasping one's five aggregates to be real has, as consequence, the development of the mind which grasps these aggregates to be the self and this, in turn, leads to defilements like "desire" which lead, in turn, to wrong actions.

We want to dispel the main cause of Samsara which is grasping. We cannot however think that the aggregates are not real without a reason - we must come to know that the aggregates are not real.

One reason is that if the aggregates exist as true they should have existed from the beginning without dependence on condition or cause. Yet we know that the aggregates are dependent upon conditions and causes such as one's parents.

Only that mind which is deluded by residues of previous experience sees all these things as true.

Therefore, the initiate is advised to believe and pray for Buddhahood for the sake of sentient beings and pray that he may be able to destroy the mind which grasps the aggregates to be real and which produces Samsara.

3/ The third stage is that of proving that the nature of mind is inexpressable.

It is explained to the initiates that if one thinks that it is enough to destroy the mind which grasps all things to be real then one is wrong. After we establish all things to be unreal, we must also destroy the mind which grasps all things to be unreal.

We cannot hold even emptiness itself to be existent or non-existent because it is inexpressable. Therefore we should not grasp anything.

It is taught that emptiness is devoid of the four extremes as follows:

- not existing
- not non-existing
- not both of the above
- not neither of the above

Thus the Lam Drā makes it clear that the experience which is being sought is not one which may be articulated in words, but more importantly, it is not one which may be articulated within the matrix of experience which comprises "ordinary" awareness.

An allegory which the Tibetan lama Gorumpa used in refuting the view of "emptiness alone" is presented as follows:

> "....clinging to emptiness alone is like a person who falls off a house. If he falls off the right side, that is clinging to appearances. If he falls off the left side then that is clinging

to emptiness alone. Either way the outcome of falling is the same."

On Tibetan Pedagogy - and the Nature of the View

The above passage is fairly typical of the sort of "arguments" which my informants present in support of the teachings. The distinction between allegory which may be taken as illustrative of a logical pattern, and the more positivist western approach to the process of debate is one which my informants do seem to grasp. And yet the form of argument and debate, the types of "proofs" offered for suppositions invariably rest largely upon the sort of allegorical argument used above.

In debating with my informants regarding metaphysical constructs, I have on occasion inquired whether or not they accepted that even a brilliantly explained hypothesis could be completely in error, or did the clarity of the explanation, and its allegorical isomorphism with other kinds or levels of experience, carry the weight of proof. Could for example, a completely counter-intuitive hypothesis be incorrect? How do they handle direct contradictions among the views of high teachers who invariably present engaging allegorical arguments?

Invariably several themes emerge in their replies. The first is the notion that what are being presented are perceived truths which are based upon the meditative attainment of the lama who composed them. The argument is necessarily allegorical because the experiences upon which the teaching is based are inaccessible, for the moment, to the student. The allegory is offered as a vehicle to help the student develop the "authority of experience" which is and must remain its only basis. The notion is that one of lower attainment does not have the set of experiential referents or cognitive capacity upon which the allegory is based. Therefore, arguments in the western positivist sense cannot be formulated. A corrollary argument which has frequently been offered is that each and every "investigator" has it within his or her power to produce the experiential referent which would enable him or her to understand the lama's teaching. It is only the westerners who have been taught that the mean level of awareness for their particular culture is the only frame of reference within which reality may be described who seem unable to grasp the fact that apprehension of knowledge may require fundamental change in the consciousness of the seeker.

A further argument consistent with this theme is employed to explain why equally great teachers and sets of teachings may appear to be contradictory.

The argument is that all teachings are in a sense lies. They are not ultimately real because the student would be unable to understand teachings at the lama's level of "reality," and spoken language in any event could not express them. Because the student's consciousness is deluded, because he sees a false reality, the teachings he can or will employ must be couched within the experiential and conceptual framework of his illusion.

Because different individuals and groups of individuals (i.e. cultures, social classes, patterns of abilities) are differently deluded, different sets of delusions form the conceptual and experiential landscape within which the seeds of the Dharma must be sown. From this perspective it seems likely that teachings given at different periods in history to different peoples by different high lamas might have taken quite different forms.

Thus one individual or group might work more easily with the notion that all is emptiness, and that nothing outside of pure consciousness actually exists, all appearances being a function of delusion. Another student or group might more effectively employ teachings embodying the notion that realities external to "mind only" do exist, but are innaccurately perceived due to delusion.

From the perspective of the adept, either view may be correct because each is couched in terms of different false paradigms both of which are subsumed by the view of one who has attained the "fruits" of the practice which accompanies either view.

Again I return to the basic premise of tantra that the teachings are to be applied as tools for awareness, not as an exhaustive elucidation of ultimate reality. The "view" which is espoused within a particular set of teachings is an epistemological tool, a working hypothesis tailored to the stage which the individual student has reached on his "path," the purpose of which is to engender experience which renders that view obsolete. It is explicitly understood that the "view" (i.e. world-view) one embraces is a part of one's practice. As such, individual proclivities dictate different practices embodying different sequences of views.

Interestingly, this approach approximates the epistemological orientation described by Thomas Kuhn in his Structure of Scientific Revolutions (1971). Each paradigm explains a range of phenomena and defines as meaningful, a set of variables. However, the operationalization of a paradigm also eventually generates data regarding phenomena which are not explained by the paradigm.

In this sense, any paradigm contains the seeds of its own destruction by making it possible for us to see new problems which are quite different from those which challenged the preceding paradigm. The new paradigm will subsume the antecedent one as a special case, and successfully handle its problems. It will however, in turn, create, or enable us to see a new set of problems which may, in turn, be solved with recourse to yet another level of paradigm. Each paradigm is, in essence, a new level of illusion, of greater heuristic utility than the one preceding it.

In concert with this logic, the teachings proceed in a "spiral staircase" fashion, cycling again and again through the same set of topics, exploring each in the context of a more "complete view."

Common and Uncommon Levels of View

The Distinction Between Paramitayana and Vajrayana Concepts

Thus far, the teachings have been on a fairly concrete level. Our teachers, next, prepare us to begin constructing a new level of view which will subsume the Nang Sum or Triple Vision.

On the eighth day of the Lam Drā it is explained to the initiates that the practice which has been taught so far in this the first division of Lam Drā has been primarily the Paramitayana or path of virtue (paramita = "virtues" / yana = "way" or "path") and the preliminaries of the Vajrayana or tantra practice (Vajra = "lightning-bolt," also a euphemism for "penis").

The second division is of the "uncommon yogi producing a firm belief in the experiences he will have in the future."

Here the distinction between the "common" level and the "uncommon" level practitioner is further refined.

It is explained that after the common yogi has known that the nature of the entire "corlo" (Samsara, the world of the senses) is suffering, and that all beings are his parents, and has meditated on love, compassion, and has done other meditations in order to liberate these beings from suffering, he tries to discover when he will attain Buddhahood. He knows that by practicing according to Paramitayana it will take three "kalpas" (countless eons) to attain Buddhahood. He thinks that the opportunity to attain Buddhahood is wonderful compared to forever wandering in Samsara.

Because of his compassion he thinks that if it takes such a long time for him to attain Buddhahood then all of the sentient beings who are his parents will undergo various sufferings. He thinks that the Great Compassionate Buddha must have preached a teaching which brings fruit quicker than that. He knows that by practicing Vajrayana one attains Buddhahood without taking such a long time as three kalpas. This Vajrayana teaching should be received from a Vajrayana Guru.

If one practices the Vajrayana path according to the practitioner's fortunate conditions and efforts, the superior ones will attain Buddhahood in months or years. The middle practitioners attain this just before death. Inferior practitioners will attain Buddhahood in the Bardo, or after seven or sixteen births.

After one has received initiation from the Guru, when one practices the Vajrayana path one will produce many different experiences, both good and bad ones. The initiate must think "from now on, whatever experiences I will produce I will not be happy when good ones arise, and I will not be unhappy when bad ones arise."

The purpose of thinking this way is that when during the actual practice, whatever experiences you will produce arise, you won't become happy or unhappy - you will be able to accept them naturally. Because of this you will be free from obstacles.

This is the end of the description of experiential vision.

The Pure Vision

The pure vision is the Buddha vision, and so this part of the teachings describes the qualities of Buddha's body, speech, and mind, referred to as the "secret qualities".

The secret quality of Buddha's body is inconceivable. This means that while the Buddha's body is seen as it appears to oneself, one cannot define its actual quality. Buddha's body is all pervasive. For the sake of sentient beings and to help them, Buddha manifests himself in different forms according to the levels of people or beings, for example manifesting as excellent emanations like "Kye Dor," or "Cakrasambhava," a lion, or other animals, or in forms such as even sailing ships and bridges.

The secret quality of Buddha's speech is inconceivable. This means that there is no difference in loudness whether heard near or at a distance. His speech is all pervasive. When he preaches Dharma, sentient beings of all the realms hear his teaching in their own languages.

The secret quality of Buddha's mind is inconceivable. When he remains in his actual nature no one but other Buddhas can understand his mind. When he blesses sentient beings by allowing them to know his mind, even children are enabled to know his mind then. His mind is all pervasive. He knows true causes of all big and small things such as why peas are round and why thorns are sharp, and he knows these as clearly as we see a thing in the palm of our hand.

This is the end of the description of the Pure Vision.

This set of descriptions is followed by the presentation of the following verse which is said to sum up the Nang Sum.

For the impure vision
sentient beings,
emotional defilements
impure vision
For yogis
Meditation,
the vision of experience
For the Tathagatas*
the unceasing body, speech and mind
the wheel of ornament
the pure vision

At this point the initiates are told about the two forms of the Lam Drä. It is explained that the teachings are split into the relatively exoteric "Tsogwashe" and esoteric "Lobshe" forms. The teachings were initially passed from Ngamchen Dorje Chang to Mus Chen Sempa Chenpo who taught both forms. To most disciples he taught the Tsogwashe form but to only one disciple he taught the Lobshe form. It is explained that only one disciple was given the Lobshe form because these teachings were secret. Thus the teachings were passed to Dagchen Dorjè Chang, next to Doringpa, then to Tsarchen Losal Gyalpo in whose line of transmission our teachers, and now we reside.

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* conquerors - refers to the Buddhas

With this further demonstration of the "authority" of the teachings, the Nang Sum comes to an end.

The Tantric View

Several central tantric themes emerge as we enter the tantric phase of the initiation sequence:

1/ There is a general increase in complexity and length, both of the sadhana and the overall practice

2/ The deity form changes from a single figure to the "Yab Yum" or sexually conjoined figures

3/ There is a general increase in the dynamism of the visualization

4/ The imagery used tends to become more "powerful" or emotive

5/ The ornamentation, and overall form of the deity changes to those associated with a "wrathful" aspect

6/ There are more and longer mantras employed as part of the sadhana

7/ The imagery focuses more directly on the manipulation of the experiential infrastructure of the human body.

8/ Longer and more serious vows and injunctions to secrecy precede each stage of initiation.

9/ The pattern of distinctions between "sacred" and "profane" are eroded along with distinctions between Samsara and Nirvana

10/ The role of the guru changes from guide or leader to Bodhisattva, and then to deity

11/ Great emphasis is placed on the concept of "empowerment," and the "blessings of the guru"

12/ Most important of all, the initiates begin to practice "self arising"

Before I proceed, I shall elaborate each of these points briefly.

1/ There is a general increase in the complexity of our visualizations. Rather than visualizing one deity, we imagine entire pantheons of deities, with collections of other symbols.

The sadhanas tend to be much longer for several reasons. First of all the "protections" which constitute the preamble phase become necessary and are longer with the "higher" tantras. Secondly, the visualizations and mantras are greater in number, and longer. Finally, the procedure whereby the sadhana is ended is more protracted.

2/ Instead of visualizing a single principle deity, with or without companions, the deities tend to be imagined in the "Yab Yum" or "mother-father" form. That is to say, we now imagine the deity in sexual union with a consort.

3/ The visualizations become more dynamic, including more and more complex sets of transformations or transmutations in the symbolic array.

4/ The power of the imagery employed tends to be greater. This is the case, for example, both in the use of vivid sexual imagery, and in the visualization of deities wearing necklaces of freshly severed human heads dripping blood etc. Even in the absence of such imagery, the "mood" or mind-state associated with the deity is often described by my informants as "wrathful."

5/ In keeping with the above, the appearance of the deity is typically more wrathful. The colors tend to be dark blue, or black, the expressions are fierce, they are adorned with weapons, skull-cups, and other powerful symbols. The deity is more likely to be visualized in an active physical posture, dancing, or perhaps dancing on corpses etc.

6/ Mantras begin to be used very seriously. The number of mantras employed within a sadhana increases from one with some of the Mahayana forms to a multiplicity of mantras with the more advanced sadhanas. The mantras are typically longer, one hundred syllables being quite common.

7/ Increasingly the imagery used in the sadhana addresses directly the "veins" or "nadis" in the human body which form the infrastructure which gives rise to conscious experience.

8/ The number and seriousness of the vows, rules for conduct and injunctions to secrecy increase concomitant with the perceived "power" and "danger" involved with the higher teachings.

9/ The student is expected to meditate the "two in one," adopting the view that Samsara and Nirvana are inseparable and one. The difference between "profane" and "sacred" is increasingly eroded along with the importance of Mahayanist moral strictures as the focus of the teachings shifts from ideology to psycho-technology.

10/ The focus shifts to "guru yoga" wherein the student must come to see his root guru, not as a human teacher, but as the direct emanation of the deity, as the Buddha himself.

11/ Increasingly, emphasis is placed upon the benefits, and indeed the indespensibility of the "blessings of the guru," and the concept of "empowerment."

12/ The initiates shift from visualizing the deity as an external form to visualizing **themselves** as the deity. Thus the deity, and the deity's mandala are experienced in the "first person."

A Note Regarding My Presentation

Given the complexity of the teachings offered in the tantric part of Lam Drä and the ethical considerations mentioned earlier, it would be impossible to present the teachings in their entirety here. To copy for the present work, edited transcriptions of over eighty hours of taped concise instruction (edited already for pauses, etc.) and ten books of field-notes would be excusable if we were attempting here only to present a detailed study of Lam Drā. Such is not the case, as I am using this set of teachings to illustrate patterns which might be derived from any number of high tantric initiations.

Thus, I will retain the chronology in which the teachings are offered, but will move rapidly through those aspects which do not address the issues with which this work is concerned.

A Mahayana Purification

This phase of the teachings begins with a Mahayana "confession" or "purification" visualization:

-we visualize a pure land of Buddha Sakyamuni

-upon a lotus-throne in the refuge tree is Buddha Sakyamuni, gold in color

-around him are 35 Buddhas

-this is our refuge - it is the refuge of purified compassion

-among these are:

seven white Buddhas
seven blue Buddhas
seven yellow Buddhas
seven red Buddhas
seven green Buddhas

-we stand very respectfully, twenty yards in front of the refuge tree in prostration mudra.

-it is emphasized that the student must believe that it is really true that the Buddhas will give him an empowerment to purify him. Otherwise, the practice cannot be very effective.

-after chanting the 32nd Sutra three times while doing prostrations before the visualization, the student is now purified.

A Tantric Refuge

After more teachings related to the Mahayanist view, based in the main upon the Madhyamika philosophical school, more detailed instructions for a refuge meditation are given:

1- begin by relaxing both physically and mentally

2- imagine the body to be absolutely empty - Sunyata

3- from Sunyata arises a pure land which is ~~blu~~ish in color

4- in the center of the pure land is a refuge tree

5- in the center of the refuge tree imagine Buddha Sakyamuni

6- visualize your enemies ahead, and your parents in front of you with your mother on the left and father on the right. Your brothers and sisters, friends, and all sentient beings are behind

7- chant the refuge prayer as a mantra

8- imagine Buddha Sakyamuni is now in your root guru's (the lama who has given you the highest teachings) Nirmanakaya form (his ordinary physical appearance). See Buddha Sakyamuni as the physical form of your lama.

9- from (your root guru's) Buddha Sakyamuni's forehead issues forth millions of white "OM"s which go to all Nirmanakaya forms.

10- from (your root guru's) the deity's throat issue forth millions of red "AH"s to all Sambogakaya forms.

11- from (your root guru's) the deity's heart millions of blue "HUM"s issue forth to all Dharmakaya forms.

12- then from your root guru's forehead, throat and heart, millions of OMs, AHs, and HUMs issue forth to all beings, purifying them, cleansing them of all obscurations and defilements.

13- all beings dissolve into light

14- dedicate the merit.

The Therapeutic Relationship

It is explained to the students that in the tantric system the guru and disciple have to know a great deal about each other.

In the Hinayana or Southern School the relationship is not thought (by my Northern School informants!) to be very important. The teacher is seen merely as a leader. In the Mahayana school the teacher is seen as a Bodhisattva and the relationship is a bit more "heavy" (to quote my informant).

In Vajrayana (tantra) the teacher must be seen as really being the deity. The students are enjoined to think of the teacher as a real emanation of the Buddha. It is emphasized that this is extremely important and also dangerous. The students are told that if they receive the initiation they cannot get the "power" if they think negatively of the teacher.

This is why at this stage students take the Fourteen Root Samaya vows, the first of which is that the student must not in any sense "be against the Lama."

It is explained that traditionally very few students received tantric initiations because they were considered to be very secret. The ratio was always one student to one teacher.

Traditionally the student and teacher tested each other for about three years, and then slowly began the teaching with tantra being introduced somewhat later. The students are reminded of the story of Milarepa (with which they are all likely to be most familiar) who was tested extensively by his teacher for twelve years before receiving tantric instruction.

It is clearly implied that the refuge ritual which I will describe next might not have been as necessary in the traditional teaching context i.e. when Lam Drā was first offered in the twelfth century (four centuries after Buddhism was introduced in Tibet). It is explained that the teachings are more public "these days" (i.e. after the eighteenth century). No explicit explanation for this change in availability is offered, although in light of other comments made by my teachers I believe that general decadence would be invoked as explanation by some Tibetan lamas.

Guru Yoga

The refuge ritual or "guru yoga" initiation is performed by the root guru. The students are largely unaware of the precise nature of the proceedings. Most Tibetans are not able to understand the root guru's language, (a specialized form used for initiation) especially not (one informant tells us) the young monks. Their conscious participation does not appear to be required in this context.

- First the guru visualizes himself as Hevajra (the primary deity in the ritual cycle which constitutes Lam Drā).
- Next he chants the mantra OM AH HUM! (Om for the body, Ah for the speech, and Hum for the mind).
- from the deity white HUMs arise and go to all the students.
- then the light returns to the guru's mouth and enters a moon disc at his heart
- we are told to visualize the above (as mentioned before, in words few can understand).
- next (in the guru's meditation) the students are born from the guru's secret place (genitalia) as the deity.
- thus the guru is now seen as the student's father Hevajra and the initiates become the guru's sons.
- next the guru (in his mind) places each of the students on his cushions of lotus flower, on top of which is a moon disc, on

top of which are four cushions. It is explained that the students did not realize that this was going on because they have too many defilements.

- The deity which we have become has one face and two arms and is colored dark blue.
- Thus it is explained, we have already been born as Hevajra, and are the Heruka now.
- the initiation finishes with an offering to Dharmapala as a protection for the initiation. This ritual seems to have been considered to be particularly occasioned by the presence of westerners. It is explained afterward by one lama that "Asians are rather dull or slow," not as sensitive physically as westerners. Therefore westerners because of this more sensitive nature amplify the sorts of problems which are likely to arise with such an initiation. In response to questioning the lama replied that westerners are more volatile, and therefore easier to move and sensitive. If they study hard they tire easily, but find it easy to get results while Chinese or Tibetan people can study hard and have nothing happen. The lama thought that this was due to different physical makeup. The implication was clearly that westerners using tantra can benefit very rapidly, but are also more likely to become neurotic.

The second part of the empowerment is designed to provide "protection" so that no deleterious results are caused by the initiation.

- The protectors, Mahakalas (very wrathful deities) are asked by the guru to go to his sons. Again it is explained later on that we are already "tantric persons" because we are the guru's sons. We also are protected by the guru's blessing and invocation of the protection deities.

The Refuge Sadhana

The "spiral staircase" motif I referred to earlier is coninued with further teachings on refuge, and a new refuge tantric sadhana.

After the students have received the initiation for the tantric refuge, they begin to receive detailed instructions for practice. One performs the refuge sadhana at the beginning of a meditation session.

As the teachings progress, each sadhana continues to complexify and add new elements. Not only is the refuge sadhana longer, but it has taken on a more tantric form.

- the student is told to visualize that we are seated in a very pure realm with the floor made out of saphire gems, very dark blue saphire gems, with gold lines drawn over it
- in the center of this very huge land is a lake and a wish-fullfilling tree
- on top of the tree there is a four petalled lotus
- in the center of this is our own guru, in the form of Shri Hevajra with eight faces, sixteen arms, four legs,
- he is in union with his consort Vajra Nairatmya
- he is surrounded, by all of the gurus starting from Vajra Nairatmya and then Virupa
- on the front petals are all the Yiddams of all the mandalas
- on the right side are all the Buddhas,
- on the back petal are all the dharma books
- on the left petal are all the Bodhisattvas.

- maintaining the visualization like this recite the refuge

- the lineage gurus are not in the form of Hevajra, It is acceptable to do the visualization either of two ways. One you visualize them in the form of Vajradhara or secondly one can visualize them in their own forms.

- recite the refuge prayer and then at the end recite a prayer requesting the blessings of the guru

- having requested the empowerment one should visualize that the many dharma protectors, and wealth deities and gurus surrounding the outside of the shrine dissolve into light and are absorbed into the Sanga or the Bodhisattvas on the left petal

- then all these dissolve into light and are absorbed into the Dharma books behind

- these dharma books then dissolve into light and are absorbed into the Buddhas on the right side petal

- the Buddhas dissolve into light and are absorbed into the Yiddams on the front petal

- the Yiddams all dissolve into light and they are absorbed into the root guru and the lineage gurus

- then the lineage gurus one by one from Vajra Nairatmya to Virupa are absorbed one into the other until finally we come to His Holiness' root guru (Ngawan Tsarpa Nyingpo)

- he dissolves into light and is absorbed into the root guru who is in the form of Hevajra and we should think with a very great devotion and great faith that the root guru is the complete combination of all the Triple Gem combined into one form.

- this is a pure very light rainbow body and their mind is transformed into a Dharmakaya or transcendental knowledge mind of all the Buddhas

- the student should think that all sentient beings have been purified with their bodies being transformed into a rainbow body and their mind transformed into transcendental knowledge.

- visualize all of the sentient beings going off to different Buddha realms like a flock of birds flying off

- and next we should visualize that on the guru Hevajra's forehead throat and heart is the letters OM AH HUM then

- first we visualize that from the letter OM on his forehead white light rays issue out come down and through our own forehead and by this we receive the body blessings of the guru and in this way receive the vase consecration and all the body defilements are purified and we receive the body blessings of all the Buddhas.

-then red light rays issue from the throat of the guru and come down and enter into our throat and this way we receive the secret consecration and all voice defilements are purified and we receive the voice blessings of all the Buddhas.

-then from the HUM in the guru's heart blue light rays come now and come down and touch our own heart and in this way all the mind defilements are purified we receive the consecration of transcendental wisdom and knowledge and then our mind is blessed by the mind all the Buddhas' minds

-and then finally light rays issue out from the three places from the OM AH & HUM white, red, and blue, and touch our three places and this way all our defilements and all residues of obscurations of body voice and mind are completely purified, completely wiped off, totally we receive the body voice and mind blessings of all the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas and all the gurus and then in this way we are completely purified and receive the fourth consecration

-and then having received the blessings of the guru in this way now we should make a prayer from the very depths of our heart that now we want to try and understand the view of the non-differentiation of Samsara and Nirvana and we pray to the guru to receive blessings that we may be able to understand this to realize this.

-(chant)

-visualize that by making this prayer to the guru that we can realize and understand the view, the guru himself dissolves into light from the throat upwards and from the top of his head downward he dissolves into a very small ball of red light about the size of an egg

- this small ball comes down and enters through our head and merges into our body into our heart and this way our own body, voice and mind and the guru's body, voice and mind become completely non-dually merged together

- the guru has already dissolved into oneself and his body and mind and speech are non-differentiated from yours so then you have to try to meditate as long as you can by knowing that although your mind is really empty that even in that clear and empty part of mind there is still a great deal of respect and devotion into your mind towards the guru so you have to try to meditate as long as you can having this respect towards the guru although your mind is very empty and very clear.

- by this example then you understand that your mind and the guru's mind are completely non-dually merged together and this is completely empty because the nature of the mind is empty. There is complete emptiness but at the same time there is a continuity there is a great desire or a great devotion to the guru and this non-ceasing devotion to the guru is the clear part of the mind so then we have these two merged together and this is how we should meditate at this time.

- maintain this meditation for a while (usually about 10 - 15 minutes in public practice)

Purification

The students are reminded that the day before (i.e. the beginning of this chapter) they did a Mahayana confession before thirty-five Buddhas. Now because we have been reborn as tantrikas we are able to do a tantric purification.

We are reminded that since Bodhisattva is a Mahayanist term we take Vajrasattva vows now instead of Bodhisattva vows.

The students are told that there are three classifications of tantra:

1/ mother tantra

2/ father tantra

3/ neutral tantra

Mother tantras are referred to as "empty means" and as constituting the "binding of the vehicle." They emphasize Sunyata or emptiness. Father tantras emphasize "skillful means" and the "collecting of secret things." Finally, the "neutral tantras" place stress on non-duality.

The Hevajra ritual cycle is a combination of mother and father tantras, and so would be classified as a "neutral tantra." This having been stated, it is added that Hevajra emphasizes more of the "mother" aspect.

The deity principally associated with purification for both Mahayanists and tantrists is called Vajrasattva. However, the students are informed that the tantric version of Vajrasattva is a Heruka (somewhat more wrathful form) and so is called Vajrasattva Heruka. The visualization, the sadhana, and the mantra are somewhat modified versions of the Mahayanist versions as follows.

The students are again reminded that according to tantric teaching we are now the deity.

The tantric sadhana for the purification of sins and obscurations consists in the following (published in: The Excellent Path of the Two Accumulations by Dezhung Rinpoche p.30)

Vajrasattva Heruka Sadhana

"In an instant, on the top on one's head (appears) a lotus and moon upon which is the Blessed One, Vajrasattva Shri Heruka,

- his body is white in color with one face and two hands

- the hands hold a Vajra and bell and he embraces the Mother Consort.

- he is decorated with the six ornaments of bone,

- he sits with his legs (crossed) in the vajra position.

- He bears the Master of his Race, the same (in appearance) as himself, (on his head) as a crown.

- In his lap is the Mother, Vajragarvi, whose body is white in color

-she is holding a curved knife and skull-cup.

- adorned with the five mudras, she is in union with Him.

-In the Father's forehead, upon a moon-disc, is a white HUM.

- Rays of light issue
from this invoking the mind of all the Tathagatas which (in the form) of the nectar of transcendental knowledge, is absorbed into the HUM.

- (the student prays) "O Blessed One, cleanse and purify, I pray, all the accumulations of sins, obscurations, faults, failings and impurities which I and all sentient beings have collected throughout beginningless samsara."

- Nectar falls from the HUM filling the body of Heruka

- then from his form it fills the body of the Mother.

- Nectar descends from the entire bodies of (both) the Father and Mother (into the meditator) and, drives out all illnesses, evil spirits, sins and obscurations through the two lower passages as feces and urine, and through the soles of the feet as smoky liquid or as pus and blood. The empty (body) is completely filled with nectar"

-at this point the meditator maintains the visualization and chants the following mantra for as long as possible (e.g. 21 or 108 repetitions are common for a short puja.)

OM SHRI VAJRA HERUKA SAMAYA
MANUPALAYA
TVENOPATISHTHA DRIDHO ME BHAVA
SUTOSHYO ME BHAVA
ANURAKTO ME BHAVA
SUPOSHYO ME BHAVA
SARVASIDDHIM ME PRAYACCHA
SARVAKARMASU CA ME
CITTAM SHREYA KURU HUM
HA HA HA HA HOH BHAGAWAN
VAJRA HERUKA
MAME MUNCA HERUKO BHAVA
MAHASAMAYA SATTVA AH HUM PHAT

- after chanting the mantra, the student prays as follows:

" I deluded by ignorance, have broken and spoiled the vows
Guru Protector be my refuge
To the highest Vajrasattva, posessed of the essence of great compassion, the chief of beings,
I go for refuge.
I confess all my transgressions of the root and branch vows of body, voice and mind.
Cleanse and purify, I pray, all the accumulations of sins, obscurations, faults, failings, and impurities."

- the meditator imagines that from the mouth of the deity (who we are reminded is inseparable from the guru) come the words "Yes, that is good, you, a noble son of noble lineage, are cleansed and purified of all sins, obscurations, faults, downfalls and impurities. From this time forth you should not do sinful actions."

- in this way Vajrasattva accepts our confession

- the deity and consort dissolve into light which is absorbed into the top of the meditator's head

- the meditator's body becomes like a rainbow

- the meditator should meditate on the fact that his own mind, the essence of the clear and the empty is the essence of the ultimate Vajrasattva.

- the student dedicates the merit with the following prayer

- "By this virtue may I quickly attain the state of Vajrasattva and place upon his stage all living beings without exception."

The initiate is expected to perform 100,000 Vajrasattva mantras as a preliminary, or "foundation" practice.

Offering Mandala

The next instruction offered relates to the construction of mandalas. There are two kinds of mandalas, the "offering mandala" (or offering of the universe) and the "visualized mandala" (or universe of the deity).

The offering mandala consists in the creation of a symbolic representation of the universe as we know or conceive of it. A short mandala offering sadhana is offered as follows:

- visualize the universe as being empty of human construction

- say the mantra BHRUM and visualize that there appears a palace in which there is a throne supported by eight lions. (The eight lion throne represents the eight kinds of human society).

- upon the throne is a multi-colored (each petal colored differently) lotus flower.

- upon the lotus flower is a sun cushion and on top of that is a moon cushion.

- visualize the root lama in Vajradhara form (the form of purity, see later discussion) one may think of the root lama as combined with all of our lamas if we have received other initiations.

- Vajradhara is blue in color (it is explained that blue has many meanings, such as emptiness, e.g. the sky and so stands for basic things. It is a very strong and basic color and so is symbolic of emptiness)

- Vajradhara has one face, two arms, and two legs and is a very beautiful Bodhisattva.

- In his right hand is held a gold (for indestructible) vajra (or dorje)

- In his left hand is a silver bell which symbolizes emptiness.

- his hands are crossed (symbolizing that the true nature of everything is non-dual).

- his root lama sits upon his head and he is surrounded by the assembled lineage.

-each of the assembled deities sits on a different kind of cushion

- all of the deities are looking at us

- on the right of the guru are all the Buddhas in Nirmanakaya form (their ordinary physical appearance).

-behind the lama and the lineage are all Dharma books (representing all teachings and understandings).

- on the left of the guru are all Sanghas, Arahats, Bodhisattvas, Protectors, and Supporters.

- a white OM appears on a moon cushion at our forehead

- a red AH appears at our throat

- a blue-black HUM appears at our heart

-from our heart center light streams forth in the ten directions and then returns with power for our visualization.

-the refuge prayer is chanted:
NAMO GURU VEY
NAMO BUDDHA YEY
NAMO DHARMA YEY
NAMO SANGHA YEY

- the meditator mentally transforms all merits which he has accumulated into beautiful objects and offers them to Vajradhara and his companions while chanting a mantra.

- commonly, the initiate uses various colors of dyed rice to create a symbolic universe upon a convex silver plate.

- having created this "offering mandala" representing the phenomenal world, he intones the mantra "OM BENZE PUME AH HUM!" and sweeps the piles of rice off of the plate with his arm.

- most initiates complete 100,000 offering mandalas as a preliminary or "foundation" practice, although some lamas require 300,000 of their students.

The Hevajra Practice - the Principle Deity

After the above teaching is transmitted, the students receive the BARGUN or preliminary initiation to Hevajra. It is explained that the initiation involves "just some small symbols or signs and that after that the lama will prepare for the initiation to the main meditation.

The main initiations take parts of two days, and may be given to only twenty-five initiates at one time, so during this period more detailed teaching is given to smaller groups who organize about those who are qualified to teach.

Hevajra Initiation

The preparation for the practice of tantra ~~having~~ been completed, the initiates prepare for the first major wang kur. It is explained that there are many different traditions and levels of tantra including:

-Clear tantra

-Charya tantra

-Yoga tantra

-Mahayoga tantra

The Hevajra tantra is a Mahayoga tantra because it involves a combination of male and female tantras.

There are to be two kinds of initiations for the Hevajra tantra. The first of these is referred to as the "Cause wang" and the second is called the initiation of the "Path," or simply the

"Path wang." The concept of Path implies that during one's practice one is receiving many kinds of "initiations by ourselves" and also the body mandala. The Cause initiation has two parts, the BARGUN or preparation, and the main initiation.

The first day of the initiation begins at the entrance to the temple where the lama's assistants help the initiates to symbolically purify themselves before entering. First the "five energies of the body" are symbolically cleansed with water, and then the "energies of the mind" are cleansed with incense smoke. After this purification the students proceed inside.

After the customary three prostrations before the lama the students are seated in two parallel rows at a ninety degree angle to the shrine and the lama.

Some explanation of the initiation is given, but it does not seem to be deemed particularly important whether or not the students are able to understand the language of the initiation.

- First the lama gives the students a "water initiation" with a sprinkling of water.
- then the lama gives to each student a red thread with a knot tied in it which is tied around the left hand as a protection. In Tibetan this is called SUNG DU (protector knots).
- the students are each given two pieces of kusha grass, one quite a bit smaller than the other. The student is expected to place the larger piece under him while he sleeps that night, (on his left side with the root side of the grass aiming toward the rear - this is the position in which the historical Buddha died). It is taught that if the student uses the kusha grass as

prescribed he will have a prophetic dream. It will be revealed via the dream whether or not the student's practice will be fruitful. The dream is also supposed to be prophetic regarding the general course of the initiate's life.

The student is enjoined to sleep very respectfully atop the kusha grass, although he is also supposed to be very excited because tomorrow he is going to see Hevajra's mandala. Because the guru gave the student the kusha grass, specific omens are anticipated in one's dreams.

The following are deemed desirable signs:

- suns or rising moons
- being in water or flying through the air
- oneself riding a horse or an elephant
- meeting some sort of lama, or a king or queen
- other sorts of pleasant things - things which make one feel good

the following are deemed undesirable signs:

- small white flowers and perhaps some other kinds of flowers
- generally unpleasant things

It is suggested that if the student has had a negative sign in his dream, he should see the lama and get some kind of blessing (i.e. empowerment) to reverse its implications.

At this point the lama suggests to the westerners present that these sorts of dreams don't make sense, especially to "science people" but that this is the Sakya system, and we (tantrists) are not regular people. He suggests that Sakya lamas who use these techniques have done a great deal of study to acquire this knowledge, and have a lot of experience in teaching this sort of thing. He suggests that it is not really necessary to make too strong a concession to science.

During the second phase of the initiation, the lama gives the initiates a red blindfold to be placed tightly over the eyes. After some preamble, the students are led to the previously shrouded mandala (a circular physical construction in three dimensions upon which are arranged a set of ritual objects in the configuration of a mandala).

- traditionally at least, or perhaps when Lam Drã is given in its less intense form, over a period of years instead of months, at this point the initiate could tell the lama about his dream, and as well, the lama might ask what sort of visual phenomena he apprehends with the tight blindfold in place. Many people say they can see colors or other visual phenomena. These may be taken to be indicative of "some kind of dependent originations of the future maybe...(or could indicate)...many kinds of things."

Our lama instructor tells us that many people say they can see what they think they are supposed to see, e.g. a red color. He suggests that it would be better to be honest.

This prognosticatory theme is repeated when the students are given a dried white "flower" (actually a dried seed) which is to be thrown on to the mandala. When the student approaches the mandala of Hevajra, and after he has removed the blindfold, with the Mantra OM VAJRA HASSA HA (trans. "I am the essence of the Vajra") the student offers the flower to Hevajra's mandala. On the mandala there are portrayed a great many deities, and the flower may fall on a particular deity, and will of course fall on a particular part of the mandala.

This will be taken as indicating what sorts of power or special opportunities we are likely to attain. Especially this oracular practice is seen as indicative of the sorts of siddhis (exceptional powers or abilities) we are likely to attain. Even if the flower misses the mandala altogether, this is not seen as particularly problematic for while it indicates some sort of lower aspect, "we will get some kind of underground treasures" (no further elucidation on this point is offered).

After the students are again seated, the lama bestows the "water initiation" going to each student with a vase filled with water. The student first bows and the vase is touched upon the top of the head, then he cups his hands to receive some of the contents which he drinks. This ritual is explained as one of purification for the body.

Secondly the student receives the Vajra Crown initiation. Crowns (similar to the Vajra Crown worn ceremonially by Kargudpa, the head of the Kargyu lineage of Tibetan Buddhism, but more cheaply made) are distributed to the initiates who are instructed to tie them upon their heads.

While still wearing the crown, the student is handed a bell and dorje for the bell initiation, and dorje initiations. The initiates attempt to use several ritual objects simultaneously while seated in the posture of Vajradhara. The difficulty in balancing all of the objects at once is cause for considerable levity.

Thirdly, the lama brings to each initiate some white liquid (in this case, milk mixed with sugar is used). This is symbolic of the "seeds of the deities," also referred to as the "essence" of the deities. The student retains the fluid in cupped hands while the lama chants briefly. With the mantra AH HO VAJRA SUKKHA HO the student drinks the seed of the deity.

At this stage the lama comes to the student with a series of strips of paper upon which are written "secret names." The student picks a slip of paper from the vessel and memorizes the name written thereon. This will be the student's secret or tantric name henceforth. Because secrecy is emphasized, for reasons to be explained shortly, the initiate either places the paper in an amulet after seeing his name , or eats it.

Next the students place a corner of their robes in front of them on the floor for the lama to walk on and he comes to each barefoot forming with one hand a mudra which looks rather like a shadow-picture of a rabbit, and which represents a rhinoceros. The students are told that when the lama is making this round he promises to each student that he (the student) will be Hevajra.

This concludes the initiation ritual itself. This is the "cause wang." A week or so later the students will receive the "path wang" which is similar in external form.

The Main Sadhana

After the initiate has performed the Refuge Sadhana, he is instructed to perform the Vajrasattva, or purification sadhana. After the Vajrasattva meditation the initiate performs the Mandala Offering.

Only then does he begin the main sadhana of Hevajra. Much of the rest of Lam Drā will be spent studying this sadhana in great detail. It is intended that the student should begin with a relatively simple version of the sadhana, and should elaborate it as he is able to do so.

In response to the ethical concerns which we have already discussed, I have deemed it necessary to deliberately omit specific detail from the following description. My informants certainly feel that only they can offer appropriate sadhana instructions, and even they would never publish them. I have tried to retain the structure of the sadhana below, without revealing sufficient detail to permit "unauthorized" practice.

For this reason I must request that the reader abide with me through countless references to "specific symbols" which are never described.

-The sadhana begins with the meditation on Sunyata or emptiness.

- With the recitation of a specific mantra, one's sense aggregates become empty

- Out of Sunyata arises a lotus which encloses a sun disc

- Upon this sun disk are laid "The Four Maras" (personified evils)

- On top of the Maras is a specific syllable

- The syllable transforms into a skull cup with its three segment lines visible.

- On the forehead of the skull cup is a visvavajra (four armed dorje) in the center of which is the aforementioned syllable

- On the skull cup's left side is another specific syllable

- From that syllable arises a purba (curved knife) which is a specific color in color and is marked on its hilt with that syllable

- One's self arises as a complete transformation of these objects as the deity Sri Hevajra

- One's body is a specific color

- One has eight faces, sixteen hands, and four legs
- The main face is a specific color
- The right face is another specific color
- The left face is another specific color
- The upper face is another specific color
- The two remaining faces are another specific color
- The faces each have three eyes (one in the center of the forehead) and four bared fangs (canines)
- One has long yellow hair which twists upwards (standing on end)
- On top of one's head is a visvavajra
- In each of the sixteen hands is a skullcup
- The first right hand holds a specific symbol (e.g. a white elephant)
- The first left hand holds another specific symbol
- These two hands embrace "the mother" (his consort Vajra Nairatmya)
- In the second right hand is another specific symbol
- In the third right hand is another specific symbol
- In the fourth right hand is another specific symbol
- In the fifth right hand is another specific symbol
- In the sixth right hand is another specific symbol
- In the seventh right hand is another specific symbol
- In the eighth right hand is another specific symbol
- In the second left hand is another specific symbol
- In the third left hand is another specific symbol
- In the fourth left hand is another specific symbol
- In the fifth left hand is another specific symbol
- In the sixth left hand is another specific symbol
- In the seventh left hand is another specific symbol

- In the eighth left hand is another specific symbol

- Each of one's heads is crowned with five dry skulls

- One is wearing a necklace of fifty freshly severed human heads dripping blood

- One is wearing six ornaments of bone (e.g. trumpet made from a human femur)

- The two right legs are extending downward, and the two left legs are curved upwards with the toes pressing against the inner thighs of the right legs. We are in a dancing stance.

- We are posessed of the "nine emotions of dancing" which are: grace, fearlessness and ugliness; laughter, ferocity, and frightfulness; compassion, fury, and peacefulness.

- In sexual union with the deity is the consort (in his lap)

- Her body is the same color as Hevajra's body

- She has one face and two hands

- She has three eyes

- Her yellow hair twists upward

- She holds a curved knife in her right hand (which extends past Hevajra's left shoulder)

- She embraces "the Father" with the left hand which holds a skull-cup

- Her head is crowned with five human skulls

- She wears five ornaments of bone

- She wears a necklace of human skulls

- Her left leg is outstretched

- With her right leg she embraces the Father

- Both deities are standing in the burning flames of transcendental knowledge

- One visualizes a specific deity for each sense element

- The initiate visualizes that from the syllable in his heart light rays emanate in all directions

- All of the Buddhas and Bodhisattvas of the ten directions converge around him and his consort in the form of Hevajra

- The initiate intones a specific one-line mantra

- The deities are then absorbed into himself without any duality

- Light again issues forth from one's heart and invokes the Buddhas of Consecration (the Dyani Buddhas)

- The initiate chants another specific two-line mantra

- As the mantra is chanted, the Buddhas of Consecration consecrate one by pouring water from a vase over the top of one's head

- While this is happening the consorts sing vajra songs and the Bodhisattvas give auspicious blessings

- Also the wrathful deities drive obstacles away while the various goddesses make offerings

- As the water fills downward to the eyebrows one receives a specific consecration

- As it reaches the throat one receives a specific consecration

- As it reaches the heart one receives another specific consecration

- As it fills the whole body one receives another consecration

- The water overflows at the top of one's head and from it appears a specific Buddha which crowns the heads of the Mother and Father

- The initiate is reminded to feel the "pride" of being the deity with the deity's pure vision

- One intones a particular two line mantra three times to bless one's mala (rosary) while rubbing it between one's hands

- From the syllable in the Mother's heart appears the main mantra as a mala.

- The mantra passes from her heart through her mouth and into the mouth of the Father

- It exits through his "vajra passage" (penis) and enters the mother through her "lotus" (vagina)

- The mantra thus revolves through the bodies of the deities continuously as one's mind dwells in great bliss and transcendental knowledge

- The initiate now intones repeatedly the "root mantra" of greater than one hundred syllables in length

- after reciting the root mantra, one next chants, one after the other, two somewhat shorter mantras as many times as one chanted the root mantra.

- one next recites a prayer, seeking the blessing of the deity

- From the syllable in one's heart, light rays emanate in all directions

- the light rays dissolve the three realms of existence to dissolve into light which is then absorbed into one's own body

- The consort is absorbed into one's self

- One's extra faces are absorbed into the main face, and the extra limbs are absorbed into the central limbs

- One visualizes specific deities for the five sense elements

- The initiate next intones a specific two line mantra

- A lengthy prayer is chanted dedicating the merit of the practice

The Sadhana sketched above is a very simple version and does not include the protection cakra, or the celestial mansion. Furthermore, this Sadhana includes very little detail compared to the full-length sadhana.

In doing the sadhana, the initiate first meditates upon Sunyata. From Sunyata he creates a vast (encompassing many universes) multi-pronged protection cakra looking rather like the spoked frame of a flying saucer. This image is said to represent the Bardo consciousness

From a transformation of the protection cakra the initiate imagines that there arises a celestial mansion which is described in great detail. The celestial mansion represents one's body. In the center of this will arise the main deity images.

Each aspect of the visualization is described in painstaking detail, and each of the hundreds of details is clearly considered to be important at some stage in the initiate's path.

In all, the instructions for the complete visualization require about forty-eight single-spaced typed pages of text. Such an initial description is further elaborated in much greater detail as the teachings progress. That is, we are told exactly how a specific symbol should be imaged where the initial instructions merely tell us which symbol to visualize.

The sadhana presents many sets of symbols which are transformed into other sets of symbols only to be transformed again. If one permits even the slightest distraction one is likely to lose track altogether. While this is considered to be a long sadhana, a monk is expected to perform it daily. One who is not a monk is encouraged to perform either this, or a shorter version with sixteen pages of visualization description daily.

Finally, a five page version was also an option. This latter version is thought more to be a concession to the householder than to be useful for serious practice. I have presented a truncated version of the five page practice here.

Clearly much of the visualization work is somewhat more arduously described then performed. It is the experience of this practitioner that several pages of visualization are learned in only a few weeks of practice. It is likely then, that any serious practitioner could master even the long sadhana eventually. One of the teaching lamas with whom we studied performs this sadhana three times per day.

Once the initiate has entered this path he is expected to live it twenty-four hours per day. Note that the initiate does not dissolve the deity visualization, but rather arises from the session as the deity. He is encouraged to maintain the image of himself and all other appearances as being the mandala of the deity.

Therefore, the initiate mentally transmutes his food into nectar and offers it to the HUM in his heart. All appearances are to be seen as deities.

At night the initiate dissolves all of the deities into Sunyata. When the initiate awakens, he arises as the deity.

The Guru/Chela Relationship - the Essence of Authority

As part of the preparation for these initiations, the students are told that some of the siddhis can be very dangerous, for example, the ability to kill with spiritual power. For this reason, among others, it is essential to keep the Samaya vows.

The implication is that a student might acquire sufficient power to build massive bad karma very quickly. For this reason, among others, tantra is very dangerous. Most important among these vows is the stricture regarding conflict with the root lama. Because the root lama "is our mother, our leader" we cannot permit "bad feeling" to arise. If that sort of feeling arises, the student is enjoined to talk to the lama about it. Similar vows relate to conflict with the Vajra family, especially those individuals with whom we received the initiation.

It becomes clear that the Judeo-Christian concept of "blessing" (especially with the context of "grace") is very different from the Tantric concept. The term when used by Tibetan teachers connotes much more, the concept of "empowerment." In this context the necessity for the "blessings of the guru" becomes consistent with tantric tenets. The implication is that it is necessary to enlist that basis for devotion which is inherently a part of the human body:

> "If even someone who is not religious is almost hit by a car while walking down the street, they almost certainly will yell. "How do you yell? yes (screams) Ok, but what do you want? (I suggest that one is likely to yell "god" or perhaps swear)...some people say "oh shit!" (laughs) "oh sheeyut!" most people say that...I understand about that. What do the English do? say "blast!".. and most oriental people say "ama" (mother)...easy to yell, but sometimes they say "God!"...even if they are not a religious person. In America may people say "my god!" even if they are not believing, (they are thinking about) some kind of helpers. That is actually the root of devotion. So that kind of feeling grows slowly, including all the deeper devotion."
>
> (from talk in English by Ven. Tartse Khen Rinpoche, Puruwala 1981)

The initiates are told that their belief in the ability of the lama to confer empowerment has a great deal to do with the efficacy of the ritual, and the relationship with the guru. It is explained that while at the moment the lama appears to be an ordinary human, this is so because we have to see him as human as we have human bodies. But actually, he is the Buddha, and if we believe this then we can get the blessings of the Buddha.

The students are assured that the blessings of the guru can be very powerful indeed, that they can really alter the student's mind, and can also cure physical ailments. At the same time it is pointed out that many beginners, and especially westerners, have a regrettable tendency to interpret the guru/chela relationship as requiring completely blind obedience and devotion without adequate preparation for that relationship. The example is used as follows:

> "What if the lama says west is east? If he just points and says west is east, what are we going to do? In past, students had to believe that way you know....(even though) it's completely wrong, actually what he's showing you now.....some tantrics (are) really dangerous.....it's true because if we believe that, some people believe....some people cannot believe right? Many people cannot....you say east is not west. So tantric is very dangerous things because it ~~depends~~ (on) devotionals, - devotionals, you have to have very great devotion then we get very good.....if you don't have the devotion then nothing happens."
>
> (from talk in English by Ven. Tartse Khen Rinpoche, Puruwala 1981)

It is explained that at first nobody has real devotion. However, if the student does practice regularly and very sincerely, especially Vajrasattva (purification) meditation, and Guru Yoga meditation, and of course the foundation practices, devotion will grow.

One teacher who was a boy with the present root guru confides that he still has relatively little devotion for the guru.

> "....at first nobody has devotion, still I don't have too much, not so much for him because I know him too much you know...yes, and especially these teachings. He received these teachings when he was very young, and he came to my master and received them with me! And we are just playing, we are very young at the time, many kinds of things we do. Still I don't have (devotion) not so much truly, but it's very interesting....."

The initiates are told that since the lama is in a human body like their own, he is going to have to act to fulfill the needs of that body. The implication is that the lama may not only engage in mundane behaviour which the student may feel is inappropriate for a Buddha, but may also do that which shocks the student (breaking vows, becoming angry, etc.). It is suggested that perhaps it is best to maintain some distance between oneself and the root guru at first until one's devotion has naturally increased, "and your mind has become very strong." The clear implication is that at some point the initiate's "view" will be complete enough that the guru's behaviour will be understood as appropriate.

The afternoons are occupied during this period primarily with lungs where the biographies of all of the yogis who passed on the Lam Drā lineage are read. It is clearly not considered essential that the student follow these teachings, at least at present:

> ".....Lung is actually just we are giving some kind of permission ok?.....this is not the ordinary document, this is for you know the spiritual, so that is why we have to have some kind of lung - that is not explanations. Just he give blubblubblub, and that way we have."

The mornings on the other hand, are devoted to Ti which must be understood and practiced:

> "Ok now Ti is means actually explanation, that now His Holiness is giving every morning, that is explanation how to meditating....he teach what we call the Ti explanation."

A number of lengthy sessions are spent in reviewing the lineage biographies which are held, collectively, to be paradigmatic regarding the nature of the path to enlightenment. (These could easily occupy a separate book and so will be used here only for reference where they will aid in our presentation.)

The yogi biographical lungs take weeks to complete. Sitting for many hours per day in the temple while the texts "pass the lama's lips" too rapidly to be understood by native Tibetan speakers takes its toll on all of the initiates. Attendance is sporadic for many. Because we understood that we were likely to be seen as spiritual dilletantes because we are westerners, I determined to attend regularly and for the entire sessions. One lama informant, in sympathy, related the following:

> "....even if one doesn't understand I think some kinds of nice things will happen. In ancient times in India when the guru was teaching Abhidamma, of course pigeons were staying in these small rooms and windows (of the temple). Of course they didn't know anything about human language. But they received good karma (because they heard the teachings) and were reincarnated in a human body and became a special Abhidamma scholar. Yeah it's very hard but maybe some good karma (is) being accumulated, - merits."

After instructions for several guru yoga and mandala offering sadhanas, the initiates begin to study the teachings relating to the major wangs.

There are actually three levels of wang associated with this practice. The first is the "cause" or "foundation" wang. It is the beginning of the practice with the deity visualization etc. This is followed by the path wang. It is explained that the purpose of this wang is to "ripen our skandas" because our skandas and organ sensing have all been deluded. For this reason the skandas must be ripened into the five Dyani Buddhas. After receiving this wang, one is supposed to practice continuously. According to my informants, it is believed that just before enlightenment, the Buddha appears before you in Nirmanakaya form and confers the wang again. This is the "result wang."

A Higher Level Articulation of the View

A great deal of time is devoted to the presentation of the Sakya view "of the non-differentiation of Samsara and Nirvana." As this philosophy is described in detail elsewhere (Snellgrove 1959) I shall not deal extensively with it here. Suffice it to say that this is essentially the Madyamika philosophy position.

It is repeatedly emphasized during these teaching sessions that the real realization of these teachings must come through the student's own personal meditation. The lama can only give pointers or examples.

The caveat is offered however, that one can have many sorts of realization as the result of one's practice. It is therefore necessary to study teachings, and to do specific meditations so that one will not be deluded by impressive experiences which never-the-less do not reflect the "pure view."

The initiates are taught that in order to be able to meditate on the correct view it is necessary to prepare the mind. For this reason the student should extensively do the foundation practices. The three main ones are:

1/ Taking Refuge
2/ Vajrasattva
3/ Guru Yoga (which includes the mandala offering)

A Higher Tantric Refuge

I must remind the reader that these teachings are usually given over a three year period or longer. In the ordinary course of events an initiate would explore each level of the "view", and practice each level of a particular sadhana for some period of time prior to receiving more advanced teachings. Even in the context of Lam Drā weeks may pass between levels of initiation. Thus the gradation of the "spiral staircase" is not as sharp as it may seem herein.

Again the topic of refuge is addressed with a new sadhana. At this point, because the students have been initiated to Hevajra, the refuge visualization changes. Instead of visualizing one's Guru in the form of Vajradhara, he is visualized in the form of Hevajra.

-The deity is visualized in the same form as in the Hevajra Sadhana (discussed earlier) with eight faces, sixteen hands, four legs, and so on.

-He is visualized in sexual union with the mother goddess Vajra Nairatmya.

-On top of his head, one upon another are all of the lineage gurus.

-Around him in the center of the lotus are the eight offering goddesses,

-the above constitutes the central shrine (in the center of the lotus).

-The lotus has four petals arranged as follows:

- upon the front petal we have all of the different Yiddams of all the different mandalas
- upon the petal to the deity's right are all of the Buddhas in Nirmanakaya and Symbogakaya forms.
- upon the rear petal is the Dharma, symbolized by piles of Dharma books, especially the Hevajra tantra.
- on the deity's left are all of the bodhisattvas like Avalokitesvara, Manjusri, Vajrapani etc.

It is emphasized that the student must take refuge in this shrine with complete sincerity. It is not sufficient to merely visualize the shrine, the student is enjoined to take refuge so deeply that it really moves him so that "it's not just a recitation."

An Overview of the Gyud Sum

The Gyud Sum can be translated as the "Triple Tantra" but the word Gyud means at the same time, "line" or "lineage." There are three lines of teaching which constitute the Gyud Sum.

The first one "Kuncha gyud" deals with the mind (Sanskrit equivalent is "Alayavijnana"). The mind in question is variously described as the "all-based conscious mind," or the "storehouse mind." This line of teaching talks about the cause of this mind, with the reasons for the arising and passing away of phenomenological events. In other words, this line deals with the cause of Samsara and Nirvana. This is the first gyud because the mind is the basis of all phenomena.

The second gyud is called "The Body Which Acts As The Means" (Lubthen Thub Gyud, direct trans. "Body Method Line"). This line of teaching is predicated upon the tenet that through the human body we have the means to realize transcendental knowledge. The example given is as follows:

> "if you have a cow from which you take milk, if you pull the udder then the milk will come down. If, on the other hand you pull the cow's ear, or horns then no milk will come out. This means that you don't have the right method"

Similarly, from the tantric perspective, the body has the potential to enable us to experience the real nature of all phenomena provided we "shape the right body." By practicing meditating upon oneself in the form of the deity, and then by doing the vein or airs meditations we can develop the body which is the basis for gaining transcendental knowledge, or ultimate truth.

The third and final Gyud is called the Mahamudra (Great gesture or posture) **Result Line**. This is the stage of highest enlightenment, or the "Thirteenth Stage of Vajradhara." According to the Sakya view, by clearing away all of the obstacles and defilements by using the meditations and body methods which are taught in Lam Drā it is possible to gain the transcendental knowledge of all the Buddhas.

The Foundation Practices - A More Complete View

Further elucidation is offered regarding the specific purposes of the foundation practices. It is suggested that without a correct understanding of the true nature of mind, it is impossible to gain enlightenment. In order to do this it is thought to be necessary to do the foundation practices very carefully and with great mindfulness.

One does Vajrasattva meditation in order to purify all the defilements, obscurations, and karma accumulated since beginningless time.

The mandala offering is done in order to accumulate the vast merit needed to gain liberation.

Most important the initiates are told, are the blessings of the guru. This is guru yoga and it is primarily through the empowerment of the guru that we are able to gain enlightenment.

It is taught that by practicing these three, purification, accumulation of merit and receiving the empowerment of the guru with very great devotion, the self arising mind will arise of its own nature. It is explained that devotion to the guru is the key, that one can accumulate more merit by putting a single drop of oil on your guru's skin than you would by making offerings numbering as many as the sands of the Ganges for an uncountable number of lifetimes. Therefore it is suggested that the guru is by far the best way to accumulate merit.

It is suggested that the guru is even greater than the Buddha because he is accessible to us. By placing the Guru in between the Buddha and ourselves, our obscurations and defilements can be burnt up "just like a paper is burned up by the use of a magnifying glass."

The lama expresses his discomfort in offering these teachings about the ultimate nature of mind to individuals who have not completed the foundation practices. He is willing to do so because His Holiness told him to, and because we have already received the Hevajra wang. He says that whenever we do this meditation on the view which is the actual teaching of Gyud Sum, we should always do the foundation practices first. It is made clear that only by doing the foundation practices does one have the capacity to meditate upon the Gyud Sum.

Normally, during the week when His Holiness is in retreat prior to the Hevajra wang, the initiates attempt (in what is a most arduous week) to complete the foundation practices, - typically 100,000 of each.

The Nature of the Deity - A More Complete view

As explained earlier, an in-depth description of Lam Drā is beyond the scope of this work. Most of the period after the Hevajra wang is taken up with the presentation of the extremely intricate "view" which is encapsulated by Lam Drā. It is impossible to present any part in detail without creating an imbalance for want of the other parts. I shall attempt to describe the essence of this view as it relates directly to meditation practice. I caution the reader again, that my informants would no doubt agree that I hold only a "partial view."

We are taught that there exist essentially three Hevajras. The first is ourself, as the foundation Hevajra. This is the "raw material" with which we are going to work. The real nature of our mind consists in the "clear" and the "empty" aspects which are non-dually merged together. All sentient beings have the same foundation as the Buddha in that the special characteristic of their mind is clear, and its nature is empty, and these two are non-dually merged together. So the foundation Hevajra is the real or underlying nature of mind. This nature of mind is inexpressable because it transcends our ordinary experience of the world.

The second or Path Hevajra is produced by receiving initiation, practicing the process of "creation" (of ourselves as the deity) and the process of completion, meditating on ourselves in the form of the deity, then reciting mantras, and doing different meditations like the vein/air and heat meditations. To produce the path Hevajra we purify the foundation Hevajra (our own form) and shape it into the Path Hevajra. This means that by purifying and shaping the Foundation Hevajra through producing the path, the result will be the third or Result Hevajra.

The "obscurations" and "defilements" which cover over the real nature of mind are not thought to be "real," in any inherent sense of the word. The real nature of mind is immutable and unchanging, the obscurations etc. are illusory. In a sense, if one actually knew this, one would be enlightened, and in this sense, one is enlightened already. When we work on the foundation mind through the path we shape that mind, and transform it into enlightenment, the highest Hevajra.

The students are told that if they could really understand the true nature of their mind as being empty and being clear and the non-differentiation of these two together then they could see themselves as Hevajra and would have the realization that they are the ultimate mahamudra and that there is no difference between them and the highest enlightened Buddha. But because of defilements and activities of karma and obscurations this true nature is covered over and obscured. And then what happens is that due to the delusion of the empty part we see "eight different things" and from the delusion of the clear part we see "eight different things" or aspects of the world. Then from the non-duality, the merging of these two deluded aspects together we see eight more aspects of phenomenology. Finally from the three together we see three more parts. So altogether this initial obscuration produces the arising of twenty-seven phenomenological elements or primitives from various combinations and interactions out of which the entire phenomenal world arises.

The above model is also presented in the Sanskrit metaphysical text Abhidarma (Pali Abhidamma).

Sadhana and the Body

After the Hevajra sadhana is given, the students receive additional meditation instruction. We are told that when we sit in meditation the body has to be in a proper position. Especially, it is necessary that the back should be straight. The lama suggests that if the body is straight then the veins in the body will be straight.

If the veins are straight then the airs will also be straight. If the airs are straight then the mind will be straight, and very open.

It is explained that if the airs are straight it is possible to meditate properly, but if the body is twisted or bent over we will not have fruitful meditation. This is the initiates' first exposure to the concepts underlying the "Body Mandala" teachings to come (described in Chapter Nine).

The Concept of Faith

Concomitant with the introduction of more tantric meditation techniques, an increasingly sophisticated philosophical and metaphysical base is taught. Especially the student is encouraged to explore each and every philosophical tenet because only through personal experimentation and experience can he engage in practice which requires certainty.

While the student is constantly told that faith, devotion, and certainty are necessary in order for him to develop "power," he is also warned that he must "make certain for himself," that he must do that which is necessary in order for him to know that these teachings are "true". The following example is a close paraphrase of the sort of argument which is presented:

> The lama suggests that we should really search for the mind, and determine for ourselves if it exists or doesn't exist.
>
> First of all if it doesn't exist then if we are living here with our body doing all these activities without a mind, and that means we are the same as a chair or a wall.
>
> If someone comes and starts cutting up a chair, someone hits the chair, takes a knife to it cuts it into pieces it doesn't think anything it doesn't feel hatred, sadness, or pain. So also if there's no mind, if someone comes and starts beating us then we should just sit here and not feel anything and someone could just cut us into pieces and we should just sit like a wall and not do anything, not cry, not shout, not abuse the person, not have hatred.
>
> There should be no expression on our part so as an experiment perhaps we could let someone come up and actually start beating us then actually we find out we have hatred, we have desire, and we have many other things actually and also we have great pain and great sorrow.
>
> So from this point of view we can see that it definitely is not the case that there is no such thing as no mind. Because through our own experience we can see that there are feelings, there are perceptions, there is an activity of mind.
>
> From the arising of hatred or again if we see something beautiful, if we see a nice flower or a beautiful country then we think this is a very wonderful thing so if there is no mind then the body cannot react to these different things.
>
> Actually it's the mind that's reacting to this. So from this point of view we can see that there is such a thing as a mind. Or first of all we can say that the one point (that the mind doesn't exist) is not true because we know through our own experiences that there is such a thing as mind.

But then at the same time when we examine this mind, where is the mind? what's the mind like? Then we should really examine very carefully about this mind so for example if we examine something else, if we examine this chair then we can say what color it is what it's made of, it has wood, it has cloth inside, it's got cotton, it's got this shape, it's this tall, it's this wide.

We can even take a ruler and measure it. We can see everything about the chair or about any object so we can really measure it, get its shape, get everything, get all the information about it.

So in the same way we should do the exact same thing with our mind. We should take a ruler and we should measure it we should see how high it is, how wide it is, how much it weighs, what shape it is, round or square.

And yet when you do like this you can't find the mind if you look for example inside the body or outside the body. So if we look inside the body and are going to examine carefully what this mind is then we have to see in what part of the body it is so we could take the body into pieces to find out, like we could take off the flesh and we could hold the flesh up by itself and look if there is a mind inside there, if it's not then we could put that down and hold up the skin (etc. for bones, each part , heart, stomach, intestines, brains).

Some people say that the mind exists in one part of their body and not in another so what if you had an operation, like now they have a heart transplant so then if your mind is in your heart then if you get someone else's heart you should have someone else's mind. (etc.)

This way we can see by the pieces of the body that the mind doesn't exist in any one part. We can't find it. And then we think maybe there are open spaces in the body and so we look for them, and still we can't find the mind (etc., etc.)

If we can't find the mind, this means that it doesn't exist inside the body because the nature of existence means that there should be something there that we can find, that we can hold on to that we can support or grab but there is nothing there.

Then we should look outside (e.g. go to the hills and mountains, look inside trees etc.) and search everywhere (etc.) so in this way we should examine all our experiences and find that the the mind doesn't not exist for the reasons we gave before and at the same time the mind doesn't exist because we can't find its existing qualities we can't find anything about it that shows that it could exist.

If at one time someone fights with you and you have hatred then that thought of hatred, where does it exist? You have to find that arising of hatred. So when someone strikes you with a sword or something where does the hatred arise from and what does it look like?

Actually we cannot find it really, there is a combination of causes but the hatred itself that real thought - there is no existence to it. We can't find its shape or its color. In the same way if we have a desire .....where does (the desire exist, is it in the object of desire etc.?)

Actually if we search for it we can't find it arising from anywhere. We can't find its source of arising, and where it resides, we can't find where does it stay? When we search for it we can't find it there in any form.

And yet, when someone comes up behind us and hits us and we stop our desire and have hatred, our thought of desire ended, so where did the desire go? Into the object? Into the hatred? What happened to it? Again we can't find it. So we can't find its birth, its existence, we can't find its cessation so we can't find this mind at all.

Therefore in this process then of sitting in meditation we have this mind that doesn't exist and doesn't not exist and we have this mind which is searching for this thing that doesn't exist and doesn't not exist. So we have these two parts then.

We have this mind which is by its very nature empty and we have this mind or this thinking process which is searching. Now the one who is searching, if we search the searcher then we find that he is empty too because we can't find where the searcher is because the searcher is just the mind and then we can say it's not existent we can say it's not non-existent.

Therefore this searcher is what we call the clear aspect of the mind, the pure aspect which is searching, looking for the real nature of mind.

Then the real nature of mind which includes the searcher also is empty.

That means that this clear part of mind and the empty part of mind are completely non-dual. You can't separate them. You can't have the searcher and the empty

> part completely separated from each other because if we have that separated we can say "oh this clear part really exists," it has some form, we can say this is the searcher of the mind.
>
> Then we can really give it a shape we can say oh it really exists like this, but then if we really examine the nature of the searching mind, of the thoughts which are searching for the real mind we can't find it. We can't find it anywhere. We can't find it inside, or outside, or any place whatsoever, so in this way it means that the searching mind which is the clear part of mind and the thing that it's searching for which is the real mind which you can't find is empty they support each other, they are non-dually merged together and they're completely inseparable just as we cannot separate fire from heat. In the same way you can't separate the mind and the searcher.
>
> We cannot separate them because they are non-dually merged together. So that's why we say that the special characteristic of the mind is that it has this clear non-cessating activity but at the same time the real nature of this non-ceasing mind this non-ceasing activity is completely empty because we can't find it we can't describe anything about it.
>
> So then these two aspects, the special character of the mind which is pure and the nature of the mind which is empty these two are non-dually merged together and this is the true nature of mind.
>
> (translated talk by the Venerable Chogye Trichen Rinpoche, quoted from the author's field-notes.)

Developing Meditative Skill

With the taking of the Path and Cause wangs the initiate has received the initiation to the outer form of the deity. He is required to create whole symbolic universes which arise from and are collapsed into each other. He has been given detailed instructions for creating and dissolving these external mandalas. The initiate is now expected to practice this creation of the form of the deity and the deity's mandala, developing the ability to see this alternate universe as if it were actually manifest.

Conceptual Prerequisites

In addition, a new view has been introduced in part, in the form of the teaching on the three Hevajras. A model of mind has been articulated which challenges the distinction between internal and external phenomena and between mind and body. The initiate has been provided with the conceptual prerequisites for the study of the Inner Mandala teachings.

The Inner Mandala

The Process of Creation

Throughout the entire initiation cycle, each topic for meditation and contemplation is addressed repeatedly at each level from different points of view, and is addressed again at higher levels within the successively "higher" frameworks of the more esoteric teachings.

In order to ensure that each student fully understands the teachings within the limits of his present consciousness, each point is repeated frequently during a teaching session, and invariably returned to at later sessions.

Additionally, the Lam Drä teaching system has built into it a strategy to establish conceptual boundaries for each point. At every level sets of specific examples are given, designed when taken together to establish tentative parameters for the concept.

Such parameters are necessarily tentative because, as the lamas frequently repeat, they are intended merely to serve as "pointers" to the experience which is the realization of that teaching.

The teachers clearly assume that the student's mind must be prepared and shaped before he or she is capable of beginning the set of contemplations and ritual practices which would eventually lead to the ability to experience faint shadows of the phenomena alluded to in the teachings. Thus the need to do the foundation practices is emphasized repeatedly as is also the central tenet of this system that only meditation can produce real understanding of the teachings.

To use rather a crude example, it is as if one wished to understand the nature of the "runner's high" to which marathon runners refer.

The average North American would first have to condition his body, perhaps for years, through multiple levels of physical conditioning to the point where sustained running was possible. Based upon the assumption that his basic physical apparatus is essentially the same foundation as that upon which even world-class runners build, the individual would attempt to alter the tissue structures which presently obscure his athletic potential.

It would be necessary to remove fat for example, and build up and tone muscle tissues - to re-shape that which is built upon the physiological base common to both the layman and the athlete.

The process of creating our physical body in the form of the athlete would likely involve a great many strategies which appear to be tangential to the production of the runner's high experience. One might lift weights, do calisthenics, swim, do breathing exercises, radically alter one's diet, associate with a different reference group, change one's daily schedule and overall lifestyle.

Yet, only when one has created oneself more or less in the form of the athlete does one possess the vehicle which could enable one to generate the experience or result being sought. It is of course likely that after some period of initial training the individual would be able to produce experiences which foreshadow the runner's high as experienced by marathon runners. Such experiences would be illustrative, would be phenomenological examples of, but would not be definitive of the experience as reported by the "adepts".

Similarly, my Tibetan informants state clearly that it is necessary to re-make one's consciousness, to create one's-self in a form which can experience the nature of mind. It is repeatedly stated that the initiate cannot, in his present conscious form, experience that to which the teachings point. Thus the curriculum for enlightenment involves a shaping and conditioning of the mind-continuum which can easily take not merely years, but perhaps many lifetimes.

The lama continually cycles through each set of ideas, parameterizing each with sets of examples, then moving on to "higher" frames of reference and parameterizing again, emphasizing at each level that one is only being offered higher level examples which are in essence false. They are however, purported to be falsehoods such as, if the initiate acts as if they were true, will yield the experience of truth.

Explicit recognition is given to the same broad assumptions which also underlie the "Sapir/Whorf hypothesis," i.e. that language consists of finite sets of perceptual and conceptual categories which structure and place limits upon our experience of ourselves and our environment. Thus the students are repeatedly informed that the goal of that which is being taught is indescribable, that words at best are merely pointers. Since that experience which is being sought is the source of all taxonomies it is argued that it is necessary to transcend linguistic and conceptual categorization. Thus the teachings address what my informants consider to be the primordial taxonomy. A model is presented whereby those initial categories of experience yield the phenomenal universe and then, through contemplation and through sadhana, that ordinary experience is "folded-in" upon itself to yield the primordial trilogy constituting pure consciousness, its essentially empty nature, and the combination of these two aspects are non-dually merged.

It is emphasized that since the mind is both "pure and empty" it is undesirable to focus upon either the clear aspect or "pure consciousness" or the empty aspect. The student is advised to merge continually these two categories in meditation.

For example, when doing guru yoga, the guru is absorbed into the student and the student is expected to generate great devotion to the guru. This thought of devotion is the clear part of mind, the knowing or seizing aspect. At the same time that the student is experiencing this devotion, this clear part of mind, he is also taught to question its nature. Specifically he should ask himself from whence this experience, this clear part of mind came, and where is its place of abiding?

The Real View

This is not an exploration to be undertaken casually. the initiate is expected to try very hard to locate consciousness, its birth, place of abiding, and cessation.

The initiates are told that this is the "real view," that which encompasses the pure consciousness, its nature as being completely empty, and the realization of the two, non-dually merged. It is repeated continuously that these words are incapable of conveying the nature of that which is being sought. The initiate must do a great deal of meditation practice if he wants to understand the nature of mind. It cannot be fitted into the categorical scheme which mediates, and indeed constitutes, his present experience of the world. Therefore the initiate must continually examine the mind and must "go into the meditation very deeply."

The initiates are warned that it is very difficult to produce this understanding of the "real view." Certainly it is felt to be the case that intellectual comprehension, the mere fitting of the words into a conceptual matrix, will not produce the understanding. However, intellectual training is thought to be important in establishing the central question as a continual part of the initiate's awareness.

The initiate is encouraged to "look for the recognizer" continually because even if he has what appears to be an experience of emptiness, this embodies a contradiction, for there is still someone recognizing the experience. Therefore we must continually look for the one who is searching. Then when we discover that the searcher does not have inherent existence and is therefore empty in its nature we merge this experience with that of the pure consciousness, or the "clear part" of mind.

It is taught that the "real" merging of these two aspects of mind in our experience as non-dual is the "real meditation" and constitutes placing the mind in the "highest samadhi." Again it is emphasized that the realization requires a great deal of practice and is not easily produced. Several examples are offered in an attempt to establish more clearly the sort of experience which the student must seek to produce.

Emptiness

It is explained that the "emptiness" which is referred to is not for example "place emptiness." An example of the latter is given:

> "if there is a dog in the room, and then the dog were to run out of the room, we could say that the room is empty of the dog. Not like this."

Nor does the term "emptiness" mean devoid of all experience. To give an indication the lama describes the experience of emptiness as being somewhat like "the night sky when it is filled with the light of the moon, very bright, very brilliant, very shining." This is the essence of the Buddha, the "Tathagatagarba," sort of like the night sky, very open, very free and vast but also not dark but very brilliant. This is the sort of "clear emptiness" which is thought to arise from the basis of the mind.

The basis for the mind, the initiates are told, is the "Alayavijnana" or "All Base Mind." This is presented as the highest of the various stages of consciousness. This "all base" or "storehouse" mind or consciousness is seen as the basis for both samsara and nirvana.

It is taught that the Alayavijnana is the basis for samsara because if it is "covered over with defilements we see only samsara" and then based upon this false view we have thoughts of desire and hatred, and jealousy etc. based upon which we perform grosser actions, all of which lead to the mind becoming further polluted, which perpetuates the experience of samsara and resultant continual revolving in samsaric existence.

The initiates are told that the Alayavijnana is also the basis for enlightenment because, if it can be rid of its temporary defilements and obscurations, this same all-base mind can be transformed into the Buddha because the realization of Buddhahood is only possible based upon this mind.

So samsara and nirvana are seen as having the same base - as one lama put it "it isn't that we go from one place to another. It's that same base, that same mind which is cleared which becomes the Buddha."

The student is reminded that traditionally each practice is done for some time prior to receiving the next one. Thus by this point the student would traditionally have been doing the "blue flower" (described earlier) meditation intensely for some months or years. Thus we are now instructed to set that meditation aside and meditate upon the clear aspect of mind in the same manner in which we meditated upon the flower.

The initiate is instructed to meditate upon the clear and the empty aspects of mind, and upon the non-duality of these two. It is suggested that if the mind is not deluded and you can meditate upon the clear part of mind, then there is no samsara for you. If one can meditate upon the clear part of mind, one is experiencing "the transcendental wisdom" which is itself nirvana. On the other hand, it is suggested that if the initiate cannot meditate upon the clear aspect then "even if he were taken to a heaven .... he will see all as samsara because he is having all the thoughts that we are having."

It is explained that the real nature of mind arises in the interval between our forgetting one thought, and the arising of the next. This is why, it is suggested, some Nyingma teachers will scream "HA!" unexpectedly at just the right stage in the student's meditation to cause him to "just forget all his thoughts, and at that time there is the real nature of mind."

This point is also made in the explanation that if a thought of anger arises and one does not understand the right view (i.e. if one's mind is deluded) then one will have hatred, and once one has hatred one will produce actions of body, speech and mind, all based on this one mind and thought. Yet if the initiate examines that thought and thinks to himself that this thought is actually the clear part of mind and then recognizes that the real nature of the clear part is empty, he also can see that this thought is empty, the anger is empty - it has no inherent existence at all. We are told that if we realize the nature of that thought of anger at the very moment of its arising then that is nirvana, that is the clear part of mind.

It is through the above rationale that the Lam Drā teachings are able to state that there is no difference between samsara and nirvana. This view, usually referred to by my teacher/informants as "the non-differentiation of samsara and nirvana" embodies the contention that both samsara and nirvana are embodied by the same mind, and indeed can both be embodied in the same thought, being seen as samsara, or nirvana depending upon the development of the individual:

> "....the thoughts the same, it's the view your looking at it with. If you look at it wrongly then you see samsara because you're covered in defilements but if you look at it correctly you see the real nature of that thought which is clear, you

> really look at that clear aspect of mind at that time and see that it is empty then that's nirvana.........then there's no other place to go - that's it right there - so that's the real essence of the non-differentiation of samsara and nirvana. So this is the real Sakya view..."

Thus the point is made again that there is no need for abandoning anything in order to gain liberation. The initiate can't renounce anything because its nature is already empty, nor can he attain nirvana any more than he can leave samsara because both are in their nature empty.

The students are taught that there is nothing to abandon, that pure self-arising awareness is already there. It is stated that if we can come to see this pure mind, the Alayavijnana, that this is really the "sphere of great bliss," the experience of the pure mind which "stays in its own nature."

The Vajrayana View of the Nang Sum Foundation

As the tantric teachings progress, the "views" presented during the earlier more exoteric Nang Sum teachings are subsumed by more esoteric tantric views. Where the Nang Sum teachings describe the various states of being as if they were places, as if they were somehow real, the Gyud Sum teachings present the view that these, and all external appearances, are produced by mind, that all states of being are states of mind. This perspective is called the Vajra Body point of view. All external appearances are seen as arising initially from the "delusion" of the three aspects of mind which form the basis for the vajra body. A conceptual map of the vajra body is elucidated.

One begins of course with the three aspects of mind, the clear aspect, the empty aspect, and the merging of these two. From the delusion of these two, arise first the "veins" in the body. First there arises the central vein or channel, the Avadutti which runs up the center of the body following the path of the spinal chord from the "secret cakra" at the base of the spine up to the "mahasukka cakra" at the top of the head. Next, on the right side of the Avadutti vein there develops the Rasana vein, and on the left side appears the Lalana vein. From these three veins a multitude of other veins develop.

It is explained that it is because of these veins that we have outer appearances like those of the hells, hungry ghosts, heavens, and so on. All creatures are said to have these veins. The form that consciousness takes, i.e. hell state, human realm, demi-god (Deva) is a function of the activation of different veins.

The example is given that if one didn't have the two main veins (rasana and lalana) one would not see the sun and moon, thus it is because of the two main veins arising in the body that we can see the sun and moon. As a person dies, there is a point at which these veins disappear - at that point, for that individual there is no sun and moon. Similarly if an individual has "purified" these veins then he won't see a sun and moon.

In answer to the question "if everyone died or purified the rasana and lalana veins would the sun and moon cease to exist?" the lama replies "yes, because the outer appearances arise because of these inner veins inside the vajra body."

My informants clearly assert that all outside appearances, that is, all experiences including all realms of existence arise because we have these veins. Conversely, if we don't have these veins these appearances cannot arise.

The vajra body is said to arise as a function of karmic activity. Outer appearances arise because of the veins, and the "elements" moving in the body. It is explained that the outer appearances which most of us take to be reality do not exist for enlightened beings. Such beings just act as if they share our consensus reality in order to teach deluded beings.

The teachings return to the notion that we are now, having received initiation, the deity. To the obvious question "if we are already Hevajra why do we have to do a practice" the lama cites a scriptural reply in the following example:

> "when we get milk from a cow, the butter is already inside the milk, but we can't see it. The essence of the butter is already there but we have to take the milk and work with it just as we ourselves have the foundational Hevajra with us but then we have to take this thing and work with it and practice the path in order to generate the path Hevajra and by getting rid of our obscurations and defilements in order to become the result Hevajra."

The Veins and the Birth Process

The teachings continue to model mind in terms of the vajra body and describe in some detail how it develops, and what its experiential consequences are. It is explained that if an individual dies without the veins having been purified he will take rebirth in a form which is a function of the pattern of their activation.

Upon taking rebirth, when the being first enters the womb, the avadutti vein develops and from that the lalana and rasana veins emerge. These three veins form the basis for hatred,desire, and ignorance which are the three main defilements. From these three main veins and three main defilements develop the full gamut of delusions from which ordinary human experiences are derived.

The three main veins are associated with the "letters" OM, AH, HUM and also with the clear, the empty, and the combination aspects of mind.

From the three veins one "makes five and five can make a hundred and a hundred make a thousand like this so we can develop the whole body."

Awakening - The Gyud Sum View of Enlightenment

The earlier more exoteric Nang Sum teachings described the path as consisting in the effort to see the Nang Sum view as a given. That is to say, our task was to come to see and appreciate the different realms of existence and the different types of suffering.

Based upon these experiences the initiate was to enter the path by practicing compassion or Bodhicitta and by doing the tranquility meditation (on the blue flower) as well as certain insight practices. In the Nang Sum or Triple Vision teachings the insight view (the view upon which one is expected to meditate) is that the mind is deluded, that our present experience is no more real than a dream. When we wake up from that dream we have enlightenment. Many examples were given to illustrate the dream-like quality of ordinary waking-state awareness. The example was used of a dream where one is being attacked by a lion. In this sort of dream one is going to experience pain and fear with resultant anger and hatred - we will hate the lion and seek to avoid or destroy him.

If we awaken however we can see that the lion as well as our fear and hatred were just illusions, or "impure vision." No lion was attacking, there was no basis for the pain, and no need for fear, and so our hatred was based upon delusion regarding the true nature of the situation. In this "awakened" state we can see that our hatred had no basis at all, that there was nothing to hate. The awakening called enlightenment is compared in the Triple Vision (Nang Sum) teachings to awakening from the dream.

Just as we can awaken from the dream of the lion attack, gaining enlightenment or freedom from this delusion so can we awaken from the waking state "dream" and its consequences.

The Nang sum teachings therefore present the curriculum for enlightenment as one of clearing up the delusions, or purifying the mind.

The Gyud Sum or Triple Tantra teaching embraces the contention that all phenomena are dream-like, that we see everything in the world as through a dream. The Gyud Sum accepts the Nang Sum assertion that in the dream-like consciousness we see things happen to us, and react to them by producing desire and hatred etc. thereby maintaining the illusion that these things are real and creating the psychic inertia or karma which results in continual rebirth in samsara. Nang Sum agrees that it is necessary to come to see all phenomena as part of a dream which is the result of delusion which is itself the result of karma which in turn is the unavoidable consequence of our actions of mind and body.

Gyud Sum differs monumentally from Nang Sum in its presentation of the view that mind itself is also an illusion.

From the perspective of Nang Sum, even if one were to wake up from the dream one would still not experience the true nature of being.

It would still be necessary to come to see the mind which has been "purified" as also being an illusion. The implications of this shift in emphasis are of considerable import. Not only must the student come to understand that his "reality," his awareness, is relative, the product of delusion, and needs "cleaning up" but he must now come to understand that there are no defilements and there is nothing to clean!

After presentation of this view in some detail, the teachings again return to the body as the foundation for both the inner and outer visions of the world. A further map is presented of the process whereby the vajra body is manifest.

Mapping the Vajra Body

The initiates are taught that for each of the three aspects of mind eight associated phenomena may be identified as follows:

1/ a particular type of defilement
2/ a particular breath
3/ a particular letter
4/ a particular vein
5/ a particular element
6/ a particular disease
7/ a particular spirit
8/ a particular physical manifestation

These are elaborated in some detail as the teachings progress.

It is first explained that the primary defilement is ignorance of the basic nature of mind. That basic ignorance regarding the nature of mind has as its consequence the grasping of the self as true, as an inherently existing phenomenon. This initial tendency naturally has as consequence the development of desire. of grasping phenomena to the self - interfering with the coming to be and passing away of phenomena - the illusion of permanence.

The desire for self quite naturally leads to the perception of "other" for self cannot exist without the boundaries provided by other. The conception of self and desire for self, along with that of other naturally lead to the basic defilement of aversion and to hatred.

It is taught that desire arises from the delusion of the clear part of mind and that the desire for self naturally leads to the creation of the idea of other which falls under the category of the empty part of mind. Thus the defilement of the clear and empty aspects of mind give rise to the emergence of grasping (or desire or greed) as well as aversion (hatred etc.).

The primary obscuration, which has as consequence the obscuration of both aspects of mind, is ignorance. Hence the Buddhist primary "sins" which are taken to be primary human experiences, of greed, anger, and ignorance are represented metaphysically and may also be linked with the physical body through association with the three main veins avadutti, rasana, and lalana which are linked to the three primary mantric sounds OM, AH, HUM. Thus, this model is a vehicle for the association of basic human experiences with underlying processes involving the veins and airs which imply specific locations on the physical body corresponding to the metaphysical body.

These three: metaphysical construct, psychological construct (e.g. grasping), and physiological construct (e.g. vein) - are further linked to what my informants believe to be primary auditory experiences (e.g. OM) and will come to be linked to kinesthesia, the physical breath, primary visual experience, basic multi-sensory experiences, and so on, as the teachings progress.

The students are exposed to several days of very intense teaching regarding this map of the phenomenal world. The process just described above forms the basis for the entirety of human experience. Thus the delusion of the one (ignorance of the inexpressable quality which is the nature of mind) produces three defilements which give rise to six, which in turn yield the twenty main defilements. These in turn give rise to thousands of defilements which represent combinations of other defilements. The students are told that the Abhidarma (Narada Maha Thera 1975) says there are 84,000 defilements.

Progressively every aspect of human experience, kinesthesia, auditory, conceptual etc. is linked within the paradigm of "the view." Thus for example it is taught that from the delusion of the combination of the two aspects of mind is derived the retention of the breath. From the delusion of the clear aspect is derived the inhalation of the breath while exhalation derives from the delusion of the empty aspect. Thus, not surprisingly, the primary mantra which is the root of all mantras consists in the three letters associated with the three main veins (the term "letter" is misleading because my informants clearly were referring to the sounds, not the written letter) and is seen as linked to the primary human experience of the breath as a building block upon which our experience of the body and hence our deluded experience of "reality" or our Ec is based.

With each exhalation one uses the mantra OM, with each inhalation the mantra AH, with each retention the mantra HUM. Each is also associated with "cakras" or "energy centers" believed to form the basis for the human body as elaborations of the initial three veins. Thus OM is associated with the forehead, AH with the throat, and HUM with the "heart center". Each in turn is associated with a particular color such as white, red, and dark blue respectively (which may occasionally be consciously varied with different practices).

The three main airs (exhalation/OM/white - inhalation/AH/red - retention/HUM/dark blue) are further subdivided in terms of "the five elements." The element is said to "ride on the air." The elements consist in:

1/ earth

2/ fire

3/ water

4/ air

5/ space

The elements represent a five category taxonomy of the qualities of our experience of the body. The earth air refers to the quality of heaviness (and perhaps solidity and inertia) of the body while the air air refers to the quality of lightness or movability. The fire air refers to the heat produced in the body while the water air is associated with the body's moisture and wetness. The sky or space air is rather more difficult to summarize briefly but it is associated with ability, mobility, and psychological space, a sort of psychological mobility or cutting through ability.

At this point the teaching on the airs is further elaborated. It is taught that from the three basic airs are formed eight, and through further combinations of those, countless numbers of airs are produced. A brief allusion is made to an association between the act of breathing and the movement of the airs which are instrumental in shaping and controlling the nature of the body and consequently the nature of our experience. It is as if the 21,000 breaths which scripture says we produce each day were somehow (in a manner not discussed) linked to the formation and maintenance of the body which is the source of our experience.

Further Elaboration of the Body Mandala

The structure and morphology of the veins are taught in some detail and their association with non-tantric sadhana symbolism is explicated. As well, the interrelationship between the veins and cakras is alluded to.

As is evident from my earlier description, the first or basic delusion of the duality of the clear and the empty aspects of mind, primordial ignorance gives rise to the letter or primordial sound AH. According to these teachings there forms inside the mother's womb, about at the fetus's navel, a small vein which is shaped like the letter AH which is associated with the delusion of the combination of the clear and the empty parts of mind. There forms at the throat the letter OM which represents the delusion of the clear part of mind while at the heart center the letter HUM is associated with the delusion of the empty part. Thus the letters OM AH HUM are associated with the physical locations throat, naval, and heart respectively. Linking these is the central channel the Avadutti vein and the Rasana and Lalana veins on the right and left of it.

The vein letter at the level of the naval, AH branches out to form a "sixty-four petalled lotus." In non-tantric sadhanas the lotuses are seldom imaged within the body although a studious lower-level practitioner might be told that the lotus is a symbol for "unfolding energy," or words to this effect. Within tantric sadhana it is common to use lotus imagery associated with specific parts of the body, as in visualizing a lotus at the heart center upon which is placed a sun and moon disc, various cushions, and on top of those the deity. In these higher teachings it is clear that the lotus is comprised of veins branching off from the main AH vein. It is also taught that each of these veins is associated with a letter.

At the heart center the letter HUM is similarly expanded to form an eight vein-petal lotus. Again different letters form from the veins inside of these.

Finally, at the throat the letter OM is elaborated to form 16 vein-petals and again each is associated with a letter.

It is understood that this taxonomy of lotuses represents only a beginning framework which is further elaborated to form thousands of veins and letters. So from the three initial vein-letters 64, 8, and 16 have emerged at the naval, heart, and throat centers respectively, and from these others are developed.

At the top of the head the letter (sound) HUM or HUNG next develops a 32 petalled vein-lotus. The thirty two veins are referred to as the "32 places of pilgrimage." It is taught that one need not physically go to the holy places because all are inside the body. If one wants to see the holy shrines one could gain the same experience from the vein-letter.

It is clear that the "letter" which forms in each vein is not conceived as being shaped like a written Tibetan OM etc. but is visualized in terms of our visual experience of the specific sound. The lama makes it clear that one is expected to visualize the letter written in his own language. A vague reference is made to the idea that language patterns begin to develop while the child is still in the womb, reflecting those of the mother.

The initiates are told that

> "the purpose of the letters being there is ....during meditation, especially the secret meditation and the secret initiation meditations arising from that initiation.......what happens is we can activate, we can place the airs in the different letters......."

One could for example, place airs in the letter(s)which represent the hell states and see the hells as if one was in those states. Or if one were to place air in the HUM at the heart center one would see the five Dyani Buddhas. It is understood then, that it is not the letter itself which must be seen, but rather that the specific letter/vein must be activated by "putting the air in it" in order to see the vision, the external appearance which arises from that letter.

The letters are not thought to be easily activated or controlled. One cannot simply chant OM AH HUM and gain enlightenment. The exploration of the veins is believed to be accomplished through doing the higher meditations which involve moving and controlling the subtle airs in different parts of the body. By "putting the air" in various veins inside the body the initiate will come to "see the thing which is activated by that letter."

Birth and Enlightenment

A further elucidation of the etiology of the vein formations is offered in the context of a discussion on the process of taking birth. When an individual has died his bardo body which is formless wanders ceaselessly looking for a place to take birth. In this state the being can move through solid objects and is able to fly to different locales by thinking about them.

In order to take birth the being has to see his future parents having sexual intercourse together. At this point three things are necessary in order for the individual to take birth. The father's "element" and the mother's "element" must join together, and his own mind-continuum must join with them at that time. The initiates are taught that when these three merge together the real nature of mind, the "clear light of mind" will "shine through" in the experience of the one who is taking birth.

At this point, if the being is capable of recognizing that this clear light is his own nature, is "the clear light of the mind of the Dharmadatu" then he can be liberated (attain enlightenment). It is believed however, that most beings do not understand the nature of the clear light and "go into a black faint" and take birth. Another possibility is that the being might gain liberation, but because of strong Bodhisattva vows not go off into nirvana, but take birth as "an emanation of some Buddha" i.e. his own Buddha nature can emanate in order to help sentient beings.

My informants teach that because the being did not recognize the Dharmadatu he is overcome by ignorance and delusion. Because of this delusion which is the delusion of the combination of the clear and the empty aspect of mind, the being's consciousness forms first of all the central Avadutti vein which runs through the center of the body. It is explained that the vein is very small - 1/100 of the thickness of a horse's hair. The veins are built up from this foundation as I described earlier.

The Nature of the Veins

The students are definitely intended to understand the veins as being, at least in part, physical phenomena. It is explained for example that the body is analogous to a machine in that if one takes it apart then it won't work any more. Similarly, if one mutilates the physical body then it may no longer have the capacity to serve as a vehicle to gain enlightenment. If for example the nature of a surgical operation was such that some main veins were destroyed then it might be impossible to gain liberation in that body. If on the other hand, only minor damage was done then surgery of accidental damage might not incapacitate the vehicle. It is emphasized however that the body as vehicle is easily damaged. It is suggested that there is some possibility that if a being with a damaged body were to have a great deal of devotion in his practice, some new veins might arise.

While animals have the veins they do not have the capacity to practice the vajrayana techniques which employ them to gain enlightenment. The lama jokeingly points to the difficulty animals would have in doing prostrations.

Forming the Body

From the initial three veins, there develops at the navel a 64 vein "cakra" or energy center. From this, at the heart an 8 vein cakra emerges and at the throat and top of the head, 16 and 32 vein cakras emerge. The students are told that according to scripture 72,000 major veins branch off from the initial cakras and in turn form the basis for the emergence of a total of 350,000,000 minor veins corresponding to the number of hair pores on the body.

There are at least two further categories of veins, those through which blood runs, and those through which only the elements move. I asked the lama whether the word "vein" with which westerners denote a channel for the circulation of blood is actually being used to represent the concept "nadi" as used in Hindu yoga, or as is represented in the charts of energy channels used by Chinese acupuncturists. The answer implies that there are "veins" in which no blood runs, thirty-two in number. The other 72,000 veins he says have blood in them. The lama states that the veins in which only the elements run are "very very thin, very hard to see."

The Five Nectars

The bodily elements are further elaborated with reference to the "five nectars."

First, when the combination of the clear and the void or empty part of mind are deluded at the time of birth the father's element which is the white element, and the mother's element which is the red element are mixed. It is explained that again words do not adequately describe the nature of the white and red elements as these are "not ordinary kinds of white and red elements," but are very pure and subtle elements. It is taught that the essence of the person at the time of birth is a combination of the mind-consciousness of the being combined and mixed very thoroughly with the white and red elements. Taken together these are called the first element.

This very refined, pure element then separates due to the delusion of the clear part of mind into the white element and due to the delusion of the empty aspect of mind into the red element, such that each is a separate element by itself.

Thus from the beginning we have these two aspects mixed together and then as a function of delusion there occurs separation of the white and red (clear and empty aspects) into separate elements. Thus, caused by primordial delusion the essence of the being is separated into three aspects, the combination (of the red and white elements, of the clear and the empty), the white (clear aspect) and the red (empty aspect).

From the first three still very rarified elements there arise five somewhat grosser but still very refined "nectars" as follows:

1/ urine

2/ excrement - the impurities of the body

3/ bone (this one may be in error - I have been unable to confirm it)

4/ blood red element

5/ the great meat - the essence of physiological growth

These nectars are understood to be still very subtle, or refined forms, certainly not physical feces, urine, and so on. The teachings continue with a description of fetal development. In the beginning the being's body is very small, like a little ball, likened to a milk drop. From this state it develops into a substance rather like curd or yoghurt and then begins to take various animal-like forms such as fish, a tortoise, a bird etc. Thus the fetus progresses up the phylogenetic scale for 9 months and 15 days. Then after 9 mo. 15 days the child who has been in a sitting position will turn upside down. After 9 mo. 20 days the child will be born. Atypical gestation periods are explained in terms of karmic processes.

Veins, Delusion, and Diseases

Yet another dimension of the vajra body paradigm is presented with reference to diseases and spirit attacks. We are reminded again that our form begins with the letters OM, AH and HUM and that these sounds then break down to yield other sounds such that a fully developed child is capable of making a whole range of sounds. The development of body, voice, and mind is similar in that from the basic form various elaborations emerge which eventually in various combinations comprise our experiential repertoire.

Because the being has developed this gross physical form, it is explained, he can have all manner of obstructions of body, voice, and mind which can cause him trouble. He is vulnerable to evil spirit attacks. Because of the delusion of the combination of the clear and the empty aspects of mind "naga spirits" can attack. The delusion of the clear part of mind renders him vulnerable to attacks from female spirits while the delusion of the empty aspect renders him vulnerable to male spirit attacks. Thus there are three main types of spirits.

These are also able to combine such that one can have a "double spirit" or even a "triple spirit attack." Thus the initial delusions render one vulnerable to five different types of spirit attacks. These in turn are said to produce 360 different kinds of "obstacles."

An extensive teaching is available which deals with the 424 different diseases which the Sakya Tibetans recognize. Broadly speaking the delusion of the combination of the clear and the empty aspects of mind is said to be associated with "bile diseases" involving the liver. Included in this category are jaundice, and tuberculosis as well as a disease called "pagen" involving the liver for which I am unable to find a western equivalent.

Delusion of the clear aspect of mind is said to be associated with blood diseases such as high blood pressure, heart attacks, "rising of the blood," and back pain.

Delusion of the empty aspect of mind is associated with "air diseases," such as giddiness and fainting. It is taught that from these basic categories of disease all of the rest of the 424 diseases arise.

The initiates are presented with a 27 component base paradigm for the disease process which I will summarize in table form:

Table one: Aspects of disease and spirit attacks

ASPECT--->	CLEAR	EMPTY	COMBINATION
INITIAL DEFILEMENT	grasping	aversion	ignorance
BREATH	inhalation	exhalation	retention
LETTER	OM	HUM	AH
VEIN	Lalana on L.	Rasana on R.	Avadutti in center
DISEASE CATEGORY	blood disease	air disease	bile disease
SPIRIT ATTACK	female	male	naga
GROSS FORM	physical body	physical voice	mind

It is emphasized that the student should become very familiar with the above categories. Since all diseases arise from delusion it is taught that one who can meditate the clear, and the empty can pacify them very easily. It is explained that one who has a spirit attack or a disease can get rid of it if he knows the appropriate sections to meditate on, and has a clear understanding of how to meditate on the different sections.

These particular teachings are considered to be sufficiently in the category of "vajra secrets" to prompt the lama to express his concern about the possibility of having broken or damaged his own vajra vows by revealing them. For this reason the initiates are asked to join him in chanting Vajrasattva mantras.

The concern with secrecy seems to be based upon several quite different considerations. First is the possibility that an individual who has not had initiation might be harmed by doing these practices when he has not been properly prepared. Secondly, and allied to this is the possibility that a non-initiate might misunderstand the teachings in such a way as to incorrectly represent them to others, perhaps to their detriment and to the detriment of the Buddhist institution. Even today in rural India where these initiations were given, one is well advised not to advertise the practice of Tantra.

The danger that these teachings will be made available to "some scientist" causes some concern. Some of my informants seem to assume that any western scientist will attempt to reduce their teachings and practice to the limitations of his own paradigms. This fear is hardly surprising given the rather uncharitable assessments to which the Tibetan teachings were subjected by the western Christian missionaries who comprised most of the long term foreign residents in Tibet prior to 1959. Most early Christian explorers wrote off Tibetan Buddhism as decadent, consisting in "devil worship" and all manner of perversion. The Tibetans are also aware that most western scientists are continuing this trend, the difference being that instead of reducing Tibetan Dharma to the conventions of Christianity they explain it, for example, within the narrow confines of Freudian psychology (e.g. Paul 1982) or see it as a purely social phenomenon (e.g. Walker 1982).

On the Death Process

Appropriately the teachings on the nature of the birth process, and the process of defilement and disease end with a description of the process of death.

It is taught that the times when it is easiest to recognize the nature of the clear part of mind are at the point (described earlier) immediately before taking birth, and at the point of death.

We are reminded that "from the syllable (letter) point of view" and from the "place point of view," after our body has developed, the letter AH resides at the navel and holds the red element while the letter HUNG resides at the top of the head and holds the white element. The white element is, of course, derived from the father, while the red element is from the mother's side.

The Tibetans believe that when one dies, one's different consciousnesses (alluded to earlier) begin to "fold in" or to disappear from the veins. At the final stage of this disintegration the HUNG descends from the top of the head to the level of the heart. The AH rises from the navel to the level of the heart. The two syllables/elements merge with the mind-continuum once again.

At this time there again appears to us the "light of the Dharmadattu" or "Buddha's Dharmakaya" which is the nature of one's own mind. It is believed that if we are able to recognize the clear light at this time then we will gain liberation from the cycle of rebirth and death and will not have to be reborn. If we do not have this recognition then the cycle of rebirth will begin again with passage through the "Bardo" or after-death states prior to rebirth.

All lamas with whom I have studied these teachings emphasize that the only way to have this recognition is to "practice the path." The argument is that sufficient beneficial karma or merit must be accumulated such that one is able to recognize pure mind. Those of great ability may be able bring together the white and red element in mediation in order to experience an allegory of trancendental knowlege upon which enlightenment may be predicated.

At this level of high tantra the practice of the path will involve sets of exercises and meditations directed to moving the elements in the body. With sufficient "clearing up" of the veins it will become possible through various exercises and practices to produce the experience of moving the white element down and the red element up, joining them at the level of the heart in meditation such that we can have the clear aspect experience of the "self arising transcendental knowledge". It is suggested that at this stage of practice that experience of the clear light is an "example experience" which falls somewhat short of enlightenment. It is believed that this stage in meditation may be developed into liberation. Minimally, one who has produced this experience regularly is believed to be capable of recognizing the arising of the nature of mind at the time of death, or conception and can gain liberation then.

Again the experience of pure consciousness is described as being like a clear light, like a reflection on morning dew sparkling.

Death and Other Phases of Consciousness

The experience of death is described rather briefly in these teachings. The descriptions offered here are consistent with Bardo Thödol instruction which I have received from two other Tibetan lamas. The latter teachings were much more detailed than those offered during Lam Drä.

It is explained that it is much easier to recognize the nature of mind after one is unencumbered by the body, i.e. at the time of death. We can purify this "heavy body," but it is much more likely that we will be able to reach the stage if we are used to recognizing the Dharmadatu while we are alive so that we can fully realize it at the time of death or rebirth.

We are taught that just as the dream consciousness is much more lucid (literal translation, "easier to know") than is the waking consciousness, so the bardo consciousness is infinitely more lucid than is the dream consciousness. The bardo consciousness is very "changeable" and so if we become used to recognizing the clear aspect of mind while we are alive we will most certainly recognize it at the time of death.

Upon dying, the individual's vajra body begins to disintegrate as each element in turn disappears. When the earth element goes, his consciousness will experience his falling down (as if) from a high cliff. When the water element goes, he will have an experience which is described as "something very thin." The departure of the air element is accompanied by the experience of one's consciousness as very light and moving, while when the fire element leaves, there is no production of heat in the body.

It is taught that after all of the above experienced changes in the body, there only remains the mind-continuum and the AH and HUNG which join at the heart center. At this point one must recognize the Dharmadattu or trancendental knowlege.

The Rainbow Body

Thus the purpose of these teachings is seen largely as preparation for the moment of death, because it is much more likely that the individual will attain liberation then. It is however explained that some individuals do manage to produce the "rainbow body," the result of complete purification of the vajra body. If the individual develops the rainbow body he will leave behind his "nails and hairs only" but still cannot go immediately to nirvana. Instead he will be reborn in one of the lower Buddha realms where he still has a mental body "just like he has in this life." In that higher realm, the individual is said to have more empowerments and will find diligent practice easy so that he will be able to give up the rainbow body and gain liberation. We are told that "in Tibet we have many lamas who did the rainbow practice ....(and).... are reborn in another lower heaven and there practice more and more more intelligently than here, and practice more diligently than here...."

Stories are told about three accomplished meditators who were seen to disappear into the Buddha realms by initiates who had good realization. One of these did Hevajra practice and the other two did Vajra Yogini practice.

The teaching is repeated continually that we see the appearances we do because, while our base is the same as the Buddha, it is defiled. Thus for example, the initiate experiences the five sense aggregates in all their various manifestations. Were he to purify the mind then instead of seeing the body and the other aggregates he would see the five Dyani Buddhas, i.e. Amitaba, Vajrocana, Ratnasambhava, etc. Specifically this means that the experience of the five "purified sense aggregates" is that of "the five transcendental wisdoms."

The Cause, the Path, and the Result

In the following instruction it becomes clear that tantra is the "path of transmutation" as opposed to that of renunciation. It is of course this aspect of tantric Buddhism which has so often been misinterpreted as a blanket sanction of excess and self indulgence. This teaching, coupled with the sexual tantras and sensationalized by western authors, has been the doctrine most thoroughly misunderstood by western investigators both historically, and in contemporary works (e.g. Walker 1982).

The Mahayana Path

As was stated in my earlier section on the Nang Sum teachings, the Mahayana path embodied by those teachings, the path of Sutra involves the individual practicing the Six Paramitas (or six perfections such as "perfection of giving" etc.) through countless lifetimes in order to attain Buddhahood. It is taught that 3 kalpas or countless eons are required for this path. It is recognized that while this is certainly preferable to wandering forever in the suffering of samsara, three countless eons of sacrifice for one's fellow beings does not offer a great deal to look forward to.

The Vajrayana Path

The secret "Mantrayana" (path or way of mantras) or Vajrayana path is called the "result path" because through initiations and consecrations the initiate is taught from the beginning that he is now Hevajra. This path's orientation consists in the assumption that one is the "foundation Hevajra." The process of enlightenment, then, is not to bring anything into being, but rather to recognize that one already has the goal. Thus it is taught that cause and result are merged on this path. The path of tantra is that of creating the conditions which make possible the recognition of one's own five sense aggregates (i.e. skandas) as the the five Dyani Buddhas.

Whereas lower paths teach non-attachment and the overcoming of desire, and hatred (i.e. grasping and aversion), the essence of the vajrayana path is that same attachment. Rather than attachment to ignorance, grasping and aversion, the tantrika seeks to use that attachment, but transmute the objects of attachment into the five transcendental knowledges, the Buddha, and the five Dyani Buddhas.

This point is considered to be crucial to the practitioner's understanding of tantra. Rather than cultivating an attitude of detachment, the practitioner must learn to have the "correct view" of the objects of attachment. Thus the tantrika must learn to "hear all sounds as mantra, see all forms as Dharma (teachings), and see all beings as Buddha." Tantric teachers emphasize the need to generate great attachment because without attachment the mind has no connection with its goal. The tantrika uses attachment as the driving force behind his practice until that attachment becomes realization.

Thus from the tantric point of view the "defilement" of desire is transmuted into the initiate's connection with the result, with that which is defiled.

Meditation on the Vajra Body

When the initiates have been instructed for some time regarding the map of the veins, the birth and death processes and the nature of tantric practice more specific teachings on the vein and air meditations are offered. The goal of this instruction in part is to facilitate the initiate's realization that all outer appearances, regardless of the realm of existence into which one is born, are the result of the veins and elements inside the body.

For example, at a particular location at the naval, a specific letter represents the realm of the Prètas or "hungry ghosts." It is taught that if one were to place the airs and the mind in that letter, all outer appearances one would see at that time would be of the hungry ghost realm. Everything would appear dried and withered, water would appear only as pus or blood, and so on. A story is offered as illustration:

> "A monk was meditating on moving the airs in his body, and put the air into this letter. He then arose and walked outside. Everything he saw was of the hungry ghost realm, everything was dry, the river was all dried up. On the far side of the river he dropped his robe.

When the monk came out of the meditation of putting the air and mind into the letter he began to search for his robe. He saw it on the other side of the flowing river, and had to swim or use a boat to go across and fetch it."

The implications of the story are of course two-fold. On the one hand, and quite acceptable in the light of western social science and neuroscience, is the idea that our experience of the world is based upon the structure of the human body. The second idea is that the mind is the only basis for the experience of the world. I have received similar and more explicit explanations of this point from several teachers regarding the nature of the siddhis or special powers (e.g. prescience, invisibility etc.). For example,it is believed that the reason one sinks into water is because of its association with the water element, and simply because one "knows" that one will sink. One does not sink into the earth because of its association with the earth element, and because one "knows" one will not sink. A Tibetan adept would be the first to agree that it is not possible to walk on water - it is the very nature of water to be fluid, something into which we will sink. But if we were to transmute mentally the water into earth, that is to alter our experience of the water such that we were walking on earth, - of course, one can easily walk on earth!

When I have questioned further it has been explained that this siddhi does require a most accomplished meditator, and such adepts are quite rare (although several living masters can be named). Additionally a distinction is made between the adept who can alter his own experience such that he can levitate, or walk on water, etc., and one who is such a "powerful meditator" that others too can witness the feat.

The belief is, however, clearly that the stuff of the world is mind-stuff. One who is completely free of the conditioning aspect of that stuff is thought to be able control it. One example which

I negotiated with one of my informants employs hypnotism as an allegory for conditioned awareness (Samsara).

Countless studies have demonstrated that an individual may believe, under hypnosis for example, that his arm is made of steel and is much too heavy to lift or that it is otherwise paralyzed. The individual will, under those circumstances behave exactly as if this were true, and will report experience consistent with the illusion. Yet, if the individual awakens from this hypnotically conditioned awareness, his arm will function normally.

Additionally, an individual consciousness may be hypnotically conditioned to "know" that the individual can perform some unusually difficult and formerly seemingly impossible physical or mental feat, being socially aggressive, turning a cartwheel, etc. Similarly from the point of view of the tantrika, you can't levitate, or perform many other feats because you "know" you can't.

Since the knowledge that one can't fly is grounded in our most primary experience of the human body, in our most deep-seated conditioning which forms part of the early development of the vajra body upon which our reality, our "self," is based, it is hardly surprising that only an adept who has quite fully "purified" or de-conditioned the vajra body could be free of the à priori assumption we know as gravity.

Just as the vajra body is the basis for all of the appearances which comprise samsara, so, the initiates are told, is it the basis for the realization of nirvana. If one puts the air and the mind into the letters which create the world then one will see those realms. Similarly however, if one puts the mind and air into other letters, one can see nirvana. For example there is another letter at the level of the navel which, if we place the mind and air in it, will enable the mind to experience the Sambogakaya of Buddha, or if one is able to place the mind and air into another letter at the level of the heart (the Dharmacakra) then one's mind can experience the "true realization of the five Dyani Buddhas" as "really being true, as real."

More Meditation Instruction

Increasingly the teachings emphasize the importance of maintaining the "correct view" as well as "correct meditation." The lama warns that it is especially important to have the understanding of the clear and empty nature of mind before creating oneself in the form of the deity.

First it is recognized that if one were to meditate oneself as a flesh and blood Hevajra this would lead to "attachment". It is explained that if one does not know the view prior to "creation" (of the deity) that harmful consequences could ensue. For example, since Hevajra is a wrathful deity one could be born as a wrathful demon. Thus the initiate should fully understand the view prior to embarking on the paths of creation and completion.

First, it is necessary to meditate that the various forms of the guru (i.e. the deities which have been expanded out from the visualized guru) are absorbed into one. Then one can meditate the view "because one is receiving the guru's blessings."

The initiate must be able to have awareness of the aspect of mind, the searcher, or thinker which really knows that he is the deity. At the same time it is necessary for him to be able to understand at that time that the nature of the searcher which is the clear part of mind is absolutely empty. It is emphasized repeatedly that one must at all times have these aspects combined in meditation together whenever one is created in any form of deity. Otherwise the danger exists that one will be born in a wrathful demon form. It is noteworthy that this sort of warning seems to be offered only with the wrathful deity forms (although I have received no non-wrathful initiations with this level of in-depth instruction). Based upon impressions formed over several years of field-work I would suggest that most Tibetan initiates would feel that this sort of reification would not be a problem were a peaceful deity involved.

Again the initiates are reminded that the most important practice one can do is guru yoga, that they need the blessings of the guru in order to achieve realization of the teachings. The warning is repeated that it is impossible to teach the view with words. Words can serve to guide on to the experience of realization, but cannot describe or specify that which is to be realized. One can allude to the "space between thoughts" as being the real quiessence, the real view, but clearly these verbal pointers are intended only to lead the mind to the meditation through which the real view is achieved.

Karma and Delusion

It is explained literally dozens of times throughout Lam Drā that our ordinary thinking is the product of and is limited by the very karmic process which is the basis for the deluded state which underlies samsara. Therefore it follows that the "truth" must be inexpressable by words, that language must be predicated upon dualistic thinking which by its very nature is false. Conceptualization is seen as useful only to the extent that it results in the meditation and other practice which is the only strategy which will lead to realization.

This theme is embodied in one of the scriptural stories which is related:

> If you throw a stone at a dog, he will predictably run after the stone and try to grab it. Our mind is like this too. If we have an experience, a thought or conceptualization it is like throwing at stone at the dog. The mind will chase after it and then when we get that then we go on and on - from one thought or concept it spreads to two and then to three and then keeps going on more and more.
>
> So if someone hits you, this produces the thought of anger, so then what you are doing, instead of chasing after the anger like the stone, you are chasing after the man. Then you start plotting, "what am I going to do to him? - I'm going to tell other people he is like this and this - I want everyone to hate him - I want everyone to like me." So like this it spreads out. Its going like this, spreading from one thing to another.
>
> Then the second way, if you throw a stone at a lion, he turns around and eats you! So in the same way, if someone comes along and hits you, instead of your thought going after the man, you turn around and say "alright, I'm going to examine the hatred - what is hatred? - you will find out that it's empty and then your going to find out that it's clear, and then your going to find out that it's empty and then you are going to find the merging of this. Then when you say that you are going to eat yourself.
>
> In other words you are going to find the real nature of yourself. This example is really the essence of the whole teaching here. Either we spread out and we go through samsara, or we come back and eat ourself, in other words we eat these defilements, we eat the

> conceptualizations until we just let the mind rest in its own pure nature. This example really comes to the point.
>
> (translated talk by the Ven. Chogye Trichen Rinpoche - Puruwala 1981)

After completing the above talk, the lama again expresses concern about his vows. He asks that we do not talk to anyone who has not had the initiations "because he has had certain signs, something in his own mind, he didn't say exactly what, but he is concerned. This is a secret path, and he asks us not to harm our own vows, or his" (translation of lama's request).

It is emphasized that the path has three parts consisting in creation, completion, and transcendental knowledge, and that without the initiation and consecration one cannot enter the path. The wang kur is the "cause" of the path.

The Structure of Wang Kur

Major wangs consist in four quite distinct consecrations which address four aspects of the being. There is the "vase consecration," the "secret consecration," the "consecration of transcendental wisdom," and finally the "fourth consecration."

The term consecration appears to be synonymous with that of blessing and carries the connotation of "empowerment." Thus the empowerments which wang kur confers are as follows:

1/ The vase consecration - consists in the empowerment of the body and veins to meditate on the body in the form of the deity. This is the empowerment for the process of creation.

2/ The secret consecration - is the empowerment for the voice. When the initiate drinks the nectar it goes down and into the letters in his throat, empowering the veins, and empowering the vein-letter mandala. This is the consecration which empowers one to do the breath meditations, and also to create heat for purifying the veins and letters. This is an empowerment for the process of completion.

3/ The consecration of transcendental wisdom or knowledge is the empowerment of the mind-essence so that the initiate can meditate the practice of "the arising of the four joys" which consists in the results of moving the elements through different mandalas in the body. The four different joys which are said to arise from these practices are named:

1/ joy
2/ great or perfect joy
3/ joy of cessation (or the joyless joy)
4/ simultaneously arising joy

4/ The fourth consecration - is the empowerment of the voice and mind together makes possible the "practice of the vajra waves," yielding the most subtle, or highest joy which constitutes the full realization of the joys which arise as a result of the third consecration.

Summary

The teachings on the Inner Mandala make clear to the initiate that all of the phenomenal world is in the nature of delusion. It is made clear that the nature of his present mental and physical form is delusion, and that consequently his escape from the Wheel of Life is contingent upon his creating himself anew in a form which can know truth. The Samsara/Nirvana dichotomy which characterized the Nang Sum view is subsumed within a tantric view, described as the "Real View" wherein

Samsara and Nirvana exist as states of mind which are in their nature illusory. The goal is no longer the attainment of Nirvana but rather is the attainment of a state of awareness which subsumes Samsara and Nirvana.

The Vajra Body is presented as the vehicle for the attainment of that view. The Nang Sum and Gyud Sum views are compared with reference to the various realms of being such as the hell states, and the Gyud Sum Vajra Body paradigm is presented as susuming the Nang Sum paradigm.

A phenomenological map of the Vajra Body is constructed including its component elements, the Veins, airs and nectars. These concepts are in turn related back to concrete experience through a discussion of the interrelationships among veins, delusions, and diseases.

The Vajra Body processes are then related to the processes of the forming and dissolution of the physical form through the teachings on the nature of birth and death.

The path is described as divided into the Cause, the Path, and Trancendental Knowlege. These stages are discussed in the next chapter as the Process of Creation, the Process of Completion, and the Result or Trancendental Knowlege.

7.

CHAPTER 9

The Final Stage

"The mind in its essence is like gold. You can form it into a chamber pot, or you can form it into a Buddha."

(from translated talk by Ven. Chogye Rinpoche,
Puruwala,1981)

The Experience of Practice

The teachings regarding the experiences produced through meditation practice are offered with frequent reminders that these descriptions are merely pointers designed to give the initiate some notion of what the experiences he will generate are going to be like, primarily so that he will recognize appropriate phenomenology. Tibetan tantric teachers give relatively little of this sort of instruction for four main reasons:

First, a given practice may "unfold" in terms of a number of variations upon a modal pattern. Minimal suggestion offered in advance may aid the initiate in generating the appropriate sort of experience. One might suggest to the initiate for example that he will have a prognosticatory dream after the first day of the cause wang. This suggestion, along with the kusha grass ritual, may indeed increase the likelihood that he will have such a dream. However, the form which the dream will take is to function as a diagnostic tool to aid both the lama and the initiate in fine-tuning his path.

The structure and content of the dream are to serve as windows on the initiate's "depth consciousness." If too much preconditioning were given, the initiate might either have an experience which reflects little of his own subconscious, or might feel pressured to report experiences which were not produced in the dream state at all.

Secondly, it is likely that too much description of dream-state or meditation-state experience would interfere with the generation of appropriate phenomenology. The particular variation on the modal pattern established by the sadhana which the initiate may experience may vary in terms of phase-of-consciousness parameters as well as in terms of the sensory modality(ies) wherein the pattern is represented in awareness.

It is important to remember that the verbal description is offered within a symbolic field (the normal waking state) which is qualitatively different from that in which the experience will be produced. Excessive reliance upon the symbolic array appropriate for a waking-state allegory of a non-waking state experience may tend to interfere with the process of entraining phenomenology in that alternate phase of consciousness.

With regard to meditation instruction, it is thought to be desirable to focus upon technique, but to avoid approaching alternate phase experience with a waking phase mind-set relating specifically to the nature of that experience.

Thirdly, the system is predicated upon the guru/chela (meditation master/initiate) relationship. The guru teaches a meditation technique or set of techniques which the initiate then practices, consulting regularly with his teacher. If the initiate is unable to "unfold" a particular meditation, i.e. is unable to generate appropriate experience, the teacher may simply encourage the initiate to continue, perhaps aiding him with a repetition of the instructions, or with additional instruction.

The guru might bestow additional blessings or empowerments upon the initiate. In addition, the guru may offer ancillary practices designed to lead the initiate more gradually to the experience of the main one (just as Lam Drä embodies a succession of contemplations and meditations) or finally, the guru might instruct the initiate to cease a particular practice and try something else.

Throughout this process it is the guru's reading of the initiate's mind-state which determines the course of instruction, initiation, meditation and other activities in service of the initiate's path. The practice functions both as psychotrophic from the initiate's point of view, and as psychometric for the teacher. Thus it is to the advantage of neither to pre-condition that phenomenology.

Fourthly, given the assumption that the initiate will do each set of practices in regular consultation with a teacher who knows him well, and given that the range of experience within the parameters of a common meditational theme is quite broad, mediated by the initiate's own karma, it would be both time consuming, and an unnecessary complexification of the initiate's training to specify exhaustively the sorts of experiences which are likely to arise.

The Stages of the Path

The path, as mentioned before, is broadly divided into the Process of Creation, the Process of Completion, and Transcendental Wisdom. Each of these in turn is divided into the sub-processes corresponding to the overall processes of Creation, Completion, and Transcendental Wisdom.

Thus, for example during the Process of Creation, one practices sadhana in which one visualizes the deity - this is the sub-process of creation. At the end of sadhana one dissolves the visualization into emptiness - this is the sub-process of completion.

Finally, one arises out of the meditation (on Sunyata at the end) "spontaneously, automatically in the form of the deity." This arising of the deity is not like a physical form. There is an appearance, but that appearance is clearly empty in its nature "like a moon reflection in water," so this is an appearance combined with emptiness - this is the sub-process of the arising of Transcendental Wisdom combining non-dually the aspects of appearance and emptiness.

These three aspects of sadhana are all a part of the broader "Process of Creation." The initiate begins the Process of Completion only after this practice is unfolded to yield a set of "arising signs."

The first stage of the practice consists in using sadhana to create (hence the "Process of Creation") oneself in the form of the deity, in this case, Hevajra. The initiate is expected, using techniques (sadhanas) of which I have already provided illustrations, to reach the point where he can really see himself as the deity. The achievement of this experience is the first sign of the completion of the "path of creation."

I have been told by several meditation teachers that the goal is to be able to not only see, but to smell, feel, and otherwise experience the full "reality" of the deity. Most initiates cannot visualize the deity at first as a stable visual image. It is common for the individual to be able at first to imagine only a part of the prescribed visual array. It is also common for individuals to "specialize" at first in terms of sensory modality, e.g. being able to feel but not see the deity.

One usually begins such a practice by imagining the visual array in front of one. This "front arising" is much easier to do than "self arising." When the initiate is able to visualize the deity in front of him with some facility he may next attempt "top arising" - experiencing the deity on top of his head. The next stage of imagery may involve oneself arising as the deity.

In this more advanced practice, the three arisings are incorporated into one sadhana. The initiate takes refuge in the refuge shrine imaged in front of him. Next he absorbs the blessing through the top of his head, thus embodying the refuge shrine. Then while doing the guru yoga, the initiate again images an external arising which is absorbed somewhat less abstractly into his body, such that he imagines himself to be one with the guru and the Buddha. Finally, during the main sadhana, the deity arises out of Sunyata at the initiate's heart center, such that the initiate himself is the deity (and the mandala of the deity).

As part of this practice, the initiate does not dissolve the deity at the end of sadhana, but rather **arises as the deity** from the meditation session. Similarly the initiate, upon laying down to sleep, dissolves the phenomenal world into Sunyata, and wakes **as the deity.**

It is, of course, extremely difficult to ascertain the degree to which the average tantric initiate attempts to, or manages to, create himself as the deity in this manner. There is however no doubt whatsoever that Tibetan Vajra Masters emphasize the necessity of doing so wholeheartedly. Further, they differentiate between a simple manipulation of the initiate's sensory apparatus, and full involvement or identification of the initiate with the deity.

One high lama in discussing this aspect of the teaching referred to a disciple of his who thought himself to be a powerful meditator because he could create very detailed, stable, and vivid visual images. The lama commented that this student was "just watching television."

It should be noted that in this, as with many other high tantras, the initiate is not merely creating himself as a deity, but is also imaging that deity's entire mandala.

The second stage of experience arises from the creation of self as the deity. As the student continues to be created as the deity, there will be times when he does not even see that form, but rather experiences "something very empty." This is Sunyata or "the essence of emptiness." At this stage, having supplanted the "defiled" form of the ordinary body with the "pure" body of the deity, the experience arises that the nature of this body is completely empty.

The third stage of experience consists in the realization of the "essence of non-duality" between the appearance of the deity (our own body now, but also all external appearances) and emptiness (sunyata). The practitioner does not see the form of the deity, or even emptiness. The visual experience is described as possibly being one of "smoky colors coming in front of you," possibly combined with an experience of "flames."

There exists a very detailed taxonomy of experiences which arise at each of the three above stages during this "process of creation." They are not offered at this stage in the teaching, and for the ethical reasons mentioned earlier, are not presented in this work. As I discussed earlier, these "signs" (as my informants call them) are used by the guru in accessing the initiate's progress.

The process of "creation" and that of "completion" involve the central sadhana which is the Hevajra deity meditation along with the accompanying foundation practices (Refuge, Vajrasattva, Guru Yoga) along with the "vein" oriented "air meditations" and "heat meditations."

Enlightenment

An individual who has achieved fully the Process of Completion is said to have attained the "First Boomi," or first stage of enlightenment (or first stage of Buddhahood). While there are thirteen stages of enlightenment, this attainment of "Tonam" or "seeing path," also described as "stream entry," is the state which is usually referred to as "enlightenment." Once this is attained the being is said to be incapable of "falling from the path."

Not surprisingly, few adepts are willing to discuss this experience in detail, and many claim that they are not enlightened. One lama who was willing to admit to having attained the first boomi, and who is recognized by the lineage as having attained it, described the difference between his stable experience and that of ordinary awareness as being greater than the difference between that of a young child and that of an adult. Other adepts have confirmed that the first boomi experience cannot be described within the symbolic field (the term "Buddha field" is used) which defines ordinary waking state awareness. For this reason, detailed teachings on the subsequent stages or boomis are considered to be completely inappropriate for novitiates.

Interpreting Mediatation Experiences

When the student begins to feel himself in the form of the deity, he is said to be experiencing the clear aspect of mind. When his meditation experience is the feeling that even Hevajra isn't really there he is said to be experiencing the empty aspect of mind. The third experience, i.e. of "smoky colors," and perhaps "flames," is a sign of the integration of the clear and empty aspects in the initiate's awareness.

The initiates are taught that after they experience these three signs of completion of the path, then will come the "arising of transcendental knowledge." Thus, the Process of Creation is associated with the clear aspect of mind, while the process of completion is associated with the empty aspect. The transcendental wisdom arises from the merging of these two, from the realization in the initiate's experience of their non-dual simultaneity.

Up until this point the initiate has been practicing the sub-processes of creation and completion within the Process of Creation. It is at this point, and only at this point, that the initiate can begin to have the realization of the "correct view." At this point the initiate can start to practice the Process of Completion and progress through the various stages (boomis) to Buddhahood.

The Process of Completion

The Process of Creation involves meditating on oneself in the form of the deity, within an external mandala consisting in a "celestial mansion" and a complex set of other surroundings, including a mandala of other less central deities. We have thus created symbolically the universe of appearances, the "world of the senses" in purified (or archetypical) form.

The Process of Completion requires that the initiate meditate inside the deity a corresponding "body mandala" consisting of the structure of "veins."

Most of the Process of Completion practices consist in breathing exercises. These are strategies for manipulating the airs and elements, moving them around in the veins which the initiates are taught underlie all phenomenology.

The initiate, having visualized himself in the form of the deity begins to build up the body mandala. Inside the deity he visualizes the three main veins, the Avadutti in the middle, the Lalana on the left, and the Rasana on the right. While he has been taught that in reality the veins are only 1/100 of a horse's hair in width, for the purpose of sadhana he visualizes the veins as quite large, rather like small tubes.

The main cakras are now visualized beginning, of course, with the sixty-four vein Nirmanicakra at the navel, adding the eight vein Dharmacakra at the heart center, then the sixteen vein Sambogacakra at the throat, and finally the thirty-two vein Mahasukka cakra at the top of the head.

In meditating upon the body mandala, the initiate is meditating on the clear part of mind. Just as the world of the senses represents the delusion of the clear part of mind, the deity visualization constitutes the relatively "purified" form which is the first attainment in the process of creation. Therefore the deity mandala represents the clear aspect of the process of creation. Similarly the visualization of the vein structure which underlies all appearances, including the deity, constitutes the meditation on the further refined clear aspect of the process of completion.

The technique is described as being rather like using a pump. The initiate is told to bring air into the veins and that then he is going to create fire. The metaphor of a mantle lamp (Hurricane lamp) is used to illustrate, although some concern is expressed by the guru that the students may take the metaphor too concretely.

The initiates are told that they will bring air into the body in order to make heat. The heat will make the elements rise through the body and then drop down, and then they will rise and drop down a second time. Then this fire and the elements will start burning in the center of the body, and this is how transcendental knowledge is to be created.

The process of completion is largely comprised of exercises in which the initiate "brings air into the body" in order to "create heat" which will serve to allow him to move the elements about via the "veins" in order to purify the body.

Because one cannot see this happen in the body, this is considered to be the empty aspect practice at this level. This aspect of the teaching is seen as addressing mind, because the process cannot be seen in terms of the physical body. The counterpart to this empty aspect practice is the creation of the world as the deity and mandala, a practice which deals with the clear aspect of mind.

Thus the initiate forms the clear aspect of mind into the deity and mandala. Upon doing this however, he is enjoined to search for the nature of the appearance of himself in the form of the deity. He finds that the real nature of what he sees is empty.

This emptiness is actually the meditation, this is the experience of **samadhi**. Thus from the duality of the deity mandala and the empty nature of that appearance (and all appearances) arises the experience which resolves that duality. In truth, this samadhi is not exactly an experience but rather a state of being in that it transcends the objects of consciousness and dualities which comprise ordinary experience.

The Hevajra Trilogy

Again it is repeatedly emphasized that the initiate is not attempting to create something new because from the very beginning he has been and is the Foundation Hevajra. The Foundation Hevajra from the beginning has the result, or rather the "seed of the result" inside it. The metaphor is used that "if the moon wasn't in the sky in the first place it would be impossible to see its reflection."

Thus the Foundation Hevajra is the one upon which the initiate is working. Through the process of creation the Foundation Hevajra is cleared away leaving the Path Hevajra. Then through the process of completion and gaining the transcendental wisdom the Path Hevajra is cleared away leaving the Result Hevajra.

It is taught then, that the form of the Result Hevajra is not a new creation, that it was there from the beginning. The difference now, the initiates are taught, is that for the first time we are going to experience it through this tantric practice.

The lamas repeat frequently the reminder that this is a long and difficult path. It is emphasized that one must combine "great intention" and "great desire" with the "correct process." By working diligently with this process with "correct meditation" and "correct intention" one can come to the Result Hevajra -that is, one can come to experience oneself fully in the form of the deity. This however is not the "full Hevajra" but rather is a temporary or "example" Result Hevajra.

After the initiate experiences that he really is the deity, he must continue to meditate in this way in order to begin to get the realizations, or signs of realization such as the smoke and fire mentioned earlier. At this point one is said to be experiencing the "examples" of transcendental knowledge. These experiences signify the initiate's entry into the "real path." At this point he has the full empowerment of the Path Hevajra. Then through the Process of Creation the initiate is able to arrive at the first stage of the Bodhisattva (the first Boomi / the first stage of Buddhahood). His "view" at this time will be the same as that of a Buddha, that is to say, he will experience the "non-differentiation of Samsara and Nirvana." At this stage the initiate (now of course an adept) is not a Buddha (i.e. a 13th stage Boddhisatva / at the 13th Boomi) because he "still has a lot more cleaning up to do," however his "experience and realization" are the same as a Buddha.

This level of realization then is actually considered to be only the beginning of a lengthy process. It is further accepted that this process of transforming the Foundational Hevajra into the First Result Hevajra represents a great realization. The reason that this stage is considered to be the first one where the individual cannot regress to lower stages of birth (i.e. cannot "fall" from the path) is that the individual's "view," his experience of the nature of being, of reality, is that of the non-differentiation of Samsara and Nirvana and is isomorphic with that of the higher stages of Buddhahood.

This Result Hevajra can of course be divided again into the three aspects of being, although at a higher level of course than were previous experiences. Thus the clear aspect of mind as seen from the Result point of view is the Nirmanakaya of the Buddha. The empty aspect from the Result point of view is the Dharmakaya of the Buddha. The Result view of the non-dual combination of the two aspects is the Sambogakaya of the Buddha. Each of these categories is further subdivided into clear, empty, and combined aspects.

The nature of these Buddha forms is illustrated by a teaching metaphor. The vast open and limitless sky is a metaphor for the Dharmakaya. The moon in that sky which reflects everywhere is a metaphor for the Sambogakaya. The Nirmanakaya may be metaphorically represented as the reflection of the moon in the countless bodies of water all over the world, each an emanation of the moon.

More Prescriptions for Practice

Throughout all of the tantric portion of Lam Drā, and with each new elaboration of the teachings, stress is laid on the necessity for practice. The students are frequently reminded that most lamas practice this path for a lifetime. It is emphasized that the meditations should be done sequentially.

The initiate is expected to do a practice diligently until he gains the phenomenological "fruits" of that practice. Then with this new understanding as a basis, he proceeds to the next practice. We are told repeatedly that the teachings are able to address only that level of understanding which we already possess. By level of understanding is meant level of world-view. In addition, it is made clear that world-view does not refer to an intellectual model of reality, but rather to our full experience of being across representational modalities.

A much favored method for gaining the fruits of a particular practice is the meditation retreat. A great many monks do traditional "cave-retreats" where one is walled inside a cave with a wooden barricade under which helpers slide one's daily food. It is also common for individuals to spend a fixed period of time in seclusion in a part of a monastery reserved for those in retreat. Such retreats can last as little as forty days, or as long as twenty years. I have spoken to several lamas who have completed retreats lasting for many years. Even young and quite junior level monks commonly do retreats lasting for six months or more.

One presciption for practice of the Lam Drā teachings consists in a six-month Hevajra retreat. Before an individual would do such a retreat, he would be advised to complete a forty day Vajrapani ("Destroyer of Obstacles") retreat. At the beginning of that, he would expect to spend some days doing refuge practice. At each stage the initiate and his teacher would be looking for "signs" that the individual had achieved specific phenomenological precursors indicative of his readiness to begin the next phase of practice.

The system explicitly recognizes that the "unfoldment" of the individual's awareness will proceed in a set of sequential stages, that each level of awareness may be attained only with the foundation of the one preceding it.

So it is that the initiates are warned that after they have received the Lam Drā teachings, they must begin at the beginning and practice each stage of the path, attaining its "fruits" prior to proceeding to the next stage. This is one reason why the teachings are traditionally secret and only offered one step at a time to initiates who are considered to be ready for them.

It is considered to be dangerous at worst, and of little avail at best, to practice tantric techniques for which one is unprepared. It would not be unreasonable, one informant tells me to practice Lam Drā for 30 years very intensely before being able to perform the higher practices properly and fruitfully.

In addition, the complete study of Lam Drā would involve studying in detail twenty-six pith-texts and commentaries and meditating each phase of the Nang Sum, Gyud Sum, and higher teachings. At each stage the initiate must generate the arising signs which are the interim goal of each practice, and at each stage will "fine-tune" his practice in consultation with his guru.

Thus, the following material would not, in all likelihood, be taught to an individual unless he had already become an accomplished meditator, and would of course be offered one step at a time, with extensive meditation at each stage.

The Body Mandala

Just as the body mandala was linked to external appearances in the earlier teachings, so the visualized mandala of the deity, our "pure" body, is now represented within the body mandala.

Through the Process of Creation the initiates are expected to transform the "impure base" of the Foundation Hevajra into the relatively "pure base" of the Path Hevajra. In turn, the new body, the Path Hevajra must be transformed into the Result Hevajra. This will be accomplished through the vehicle of the "Inner Mandala," whereby the deity and his outer mandala will be symbolized as physical locations and functions of the initiate's physical body (which has from the perspective of these teachings been transformed into the form of the deity).

From the point of view of the "outer body" (the ordinary physical body) the initiates have been taught that there exists a complex hierarchy of "veins" and "elements" inside the body. From the "inner" point of view, just as the ordinary body has been transformed into the deity, so are the veins and elements transformed into different deities to comprise the inner body mandala.

Internalizing the Universe of the Deity

First the initiate must come to understand the human body as a protection cakra (as in the deity and mandala visualization in the main sadhana). The student must not think of the visualization of the deity and surroundings as comprising the deity and that which is external to the deity. The deity himself must be experienced as both the container, and that which is contained. The initiate will create (or understand) his body as the inner protection cakra corresponding to the outer protection cakra which is described in the sadhana.

Just as the base for the outer protection cakra is a Visvavajra (double or crossed vajra, or dorje) so the initiate visualizes a visvavajra at the top of his head mixed with the flesh and bone, and each of the four "heads" of the visvavajra is a specified different color (white, yellow, red, green).

The soles of the feet are created as the "vajra ground" by filling them with vajras while the ribs form the vajra fence enclosing the body.

In similar manner, the body is mentally fashioned into an impregnable fortress or protection cakra.

The Celestial Mansion

Having set up the protection cakra the initiate next creates the Celestial Mansion (also part of the sadhana) to give form to the tenet that the body is actually the essence of the Celestial Mansion as well as the Protection Cakra.

To construct the Celestial Mansion one begins with the "four elements" out of which all phenomena are created (earth, air, fire and water). At the soles of the feet one creates an "air mandala" with a specified shape, associated with a specific color, a deity, a symbol, and a letter. At the conjunction of the legs is created a "fire mandala" in a specified shape, color, deity and letter. Similarly is created at the stomach, above the naval, a water mandala in association with a specific symbol, shape, color, letter, and deity. Finally, on top, at the level of the heart is created an "earth mandala," again with a different shape, color, letter, and deity.

In the longest form of this practice (of which I have knowledge) the initiate must visualize the entirety of the universe with himself at its center. In the extensive visualization he meditates Mount Sumeru with all of "five continents" and great detail. The Celestial Mansion is visualized as residing on the top of Mount Sumeru which is the center of the universe in Tibetan cosmology. This centering of oneself is associated with great strength and especially with stability and ensures that the initiate's visualization of himself in the form of the deity will be very stable.

The student visualizes that his spine is Mount Sumeru. There are five terraces on the mountain which correspond to five hierarchically organized groups of vertebrae with one at the top (the backbone has 21 vertebrae).

The backbone is visualized as having a very strong center. Its four sides are visualized as having very different textures and colors associated with them. According to Abhidamma, on top of the spine are the great palaces of Indra. So the Celestial Mansion which the initiate is creating is really on top of Mount Sumeru which is really on top of his spine.

Also according to the Abhidamma teaching, around the main palace there are four lesser palaces for the four queens of Indra which are visualized on either side, and on the front and back of the head. The palaces are not visualized as sitting upon the head, but rather the bones on the four sides represent the palaces.

The four doors of the Celestial Mansion are the four apertures of ones's physical heart through which the subtle winds of the four elements pass. The four sets of two outer pillars on either sides of the four doors represent the practitioner's upper arm, forearm, thigh, and shin bones (actually not the bone itself, but rather the marrow) and so on.

Thus, the entire body is mapped on to the Celestial Mansion such that with a little effort the initiate is able to experience his body in this form. Yet it is emphasized that this imagery should not be permitted to obstruct the visualization of oneself as the deity along with the other aspects like the Protection Cakra. The imagery should be an enhancement not a replacement for the other aspects of the visualization. The technique used to maintain multiple sets of apparently mutually exclusive images is not explained in detail. It is tacitly understood that this task is not difficult in the mind state which these teachings aim to invoke.

The creation of the Protection Cakra and the Celestial Mansion completes the Mandala of the Container.

The complete teaching on the creation of the inner deities inside the body is extremely lengthy, and clearly beyond the scope of the present work. I shall, therefore deal with this material in an illustrative manner.

The creation of the deities in the body mandala begins quite logically at the naval. (The reader will recall that the navel is the center of creation for the being). It is taught that one is not so much going to create the deities, but rather will recognize them.

The initiate images at the navel a vein in the shape of a letter ANG. The vein itself represents the female aspect, and thus the "mother consort" Ratnatara, while the elements passing through it represent the male or Father aspect, the deity Ratnasambhava.

In this way, the central vein and its element at this cakra are transformed into Male deity and consort. The reader will recall from the earlier Body Mandala teachings that the ANG at the navel branches out into a sixty-four vein cakra, and so sixty-four goddesses arise, all in the form of the consort. From the central ANG four veins emerge which split into two branches each forming an outer circle of 16 veins which in turn bifurcate to form a circle of 32 which branch to 64 veins in all.

The form of the veins represents the female aspect while the elements inside them represent the male aspect. The initiate is instructed to concentrate on this idea, especially with regard to the central letter ANG.

Whereas in the previous teachings one visualized deities and veins and elements in relatively concrete forms, at this level of practice, one is expected to be able to "understand" (i.e. experience) the veins and elements as the "guna" or essence - the qualities of the deity and the deity as the guna of the veins and elements without needing a single pseudo-physical form.

Specifically, the initiate does not visualize that the ANG transforms into the deity, but rather cannot do so "because the veins were there right from the beginning, so we can't visualize the letters and then transform them."

The initiate must visualize the forms of the deities but must incorporate the awareness that they are actually the veins and elements in his imagery. He must maintain awareness that the body is the female aspect and that the airs passing through are representing the male part. They are in the forms of deities but their essence actually is the same as the veins and elements inside the body.

This set of visualizations will alter in focus depending upon the initiate's level of practice. During the Creation stage of practice, emphasis will be placed on visualizing the deities. During the Process of Completion, the practitioner will concentrate mainly on the veins and letters. For example, during the creation phase of the practice one would visualize a bright yellow Ratnasambhava in the center of the mandala while during Completion one would focus on the letter ANG.

Some insight into the manner in which sadhanas are developed may be gleaned from the explanation of the lineage transmission of the deity visualization at the Nirmanicakra (at the naval). It seems that in the original sadhana as taught in India before the teachings were brought to Tibet, the practitioner imagined the deities, Ratnasambhava and consort Ratnatara, to be adorned only with the bone ornaments. However, Guyadhara, the fifth lama in this transmission lineage, and the one who introduced these teachings to Tibet, had experience which altered the sadhana. It is taught that Guyadhara, when he meditated, saw all of the deities inside his body very clearly. When he saw the deities, they appeared adorned not only with bone ornaments, but also with the jewel ornaments. From that point on, the transmission included the jewel ornaments.

Similar sorts of experiences doubtless underlie other aspects of the detailed teaching on visualization of the deities. One is told for example that the deities at the naval, heart, and head cakras are to be imagined in proportion to one's own body. The main deity is visualized as equivalent in size to the distance from the top joint of the thumb to its end while the female deities in the cakra are the size of the distance between the top joint of the little finger and its end.

At the secret organ (genitalia) cakra and at the throat cakra the main deity is the size of a wheat grain and the goddesses are the size of mustard seeds.

At the secret organ (visualized below the navel at the base of the genitalia) is a 32 petalled Mahasukka cakra which is also the cakra of the deity Amoghasiddhi with the letter HUNG in the center. As always, the initiate must understand the veins to represent the female (or emptiness) aspect while the elements represent the male or (pure consciousness) aspect.

We are told that this is called a Mahasukka (literally "great bliss") cakra because at the time of the third consecration when the four blisses arise, this occurs as a result of the elements passing through the veins and especially passing through the veins of the secret organ. So in this sense the genitalia are the locus for the arising of the "great bliss" or transcendental knowledge.

The thirty-two vein cakra at the top of the head is also called a Mahasukka cakra and has the letter HUNG at its center. It is called a cakra of great bliss because it is through the "melting" of the letter at the top of the head that the Bodhicitta will pass through the veins resulting in the arising of the great blisses. The cakra is visualized as residing in the brain.

The reader will doubtless recall from the teachings on the genesis of the human form that the Crown cakra at the top of the head is the receptacle for the purified "white element" while the Mahasukka cakra at the navel is the receptacle of the purified "red element." When these elements are merged at the heart center at death and birth, the essence of mind is experienced.

The heart cakra or Dharmacakra with its eight vein mandala and the central deity Akshobya is considered to represent the nature of all Dharmas (forms) - it represents the nature of mind itself, or the realization of mind.

In all, the practitioner must learn to visualize one hundred and fifty-seven deities in the five main cakras. It is emphasized that these are only the main ones.

According to Lam Drā it is only through our "ignorance" that we can't recognize that the deities are there without being told about them. From these basic 157, we will create a further pantheon of deities in the body.

Each deity, beginning with the five main deities in the center of the cakras is visualized in great detail, in a specific color and with anthropomorphic body shape (one face, two arms, two legs etc.). Each is seen wearing the five bone ornaments and a set of jewel ornaments. Each bears the "thirty-two auspicious marks" upon his body (e.g. bump on top of the head, cakra wheels on palms of hands or soles of feet, mark in the center of the forehead representing the third eye, etc.). Each also bears the "eighty-four minor marks" on his body.

As well as visualizing the 157 deities with colors, bone and jewel ornaments, 116 physical marks (32 + 84), and specific location, the practitioner also mentally transforms the sense organs (the physical organs themselves) into the forms of deities, adding another 5 to the total "inner creation" mandala.

The reader is reminded that the above described "Inner Creation" mandala is visualized concurrent with the "Outer Creation" mandala including oneself as the deity and all of the deities and symbols, Protection cakra, etc., of the Hevajra sadhana.

While the deity is visualized with eight faces, having twenty-four eyes (8 X 3 - one in the forehead), sixteen arms, and six legs, the practitioner associates the inner mandala only with the main body of the deity which has one central face, two hands etc. The main body of the deity is considered to be our own physical body.

Summary

I present the forgoing, in part, to illustrate the complexity as well as the form of the more advanced "inner teachings" which characterize tantra. Clearly the initiate will require a high level of meditative skill in order to create and maintain the image of the deity, to complete the process of creation. In truth, this practice might easily take years. My lama informants have described "retreats" of several months in complete isolation wherein initiates attempt to create the image of the deity. It would not be unusual for a Tibetan initiate to enter retreat for many years to meditate the Hevajra sadhana.

Having created the outer form of the deity the initiate now begins the process of completion wherein he integrates "external" phenomena like a mountain and a palace with "internal" phenomena like bones and flesh. Thus the initiate has re-created himself in terms of a symbolic array which represents, for him, the entirety of the phenomenal universe.

We have also learned that the process of creation is only the first step. Creating oneself in the form of the deity is done in order that one may dissolve oneself more easily.

The Initiates

By this stage in the Lam Drā most of the initiates are feeling thoroughly intimidated by the task which we have been set. None of us have had a chance to contemplate the Nang Sum teachings, and certainly we have not been able to do even the early "blue flower" sadhana very often. Yet we have been given initiations and detailed instructions for practice of several much more esoteric stages. We realize that we have committed ourselves to a lifetime of practice - a lifetime of this path. A path which is dedicated to the destruction of our "self".

Some of the more naive initiates bemuse our lama instructors by assuming that they are expected to practice these higher, more difficult meditations immediately. It is explained that one is receiving a very intense set of teachings which are to be practiced in order of their presentation to us. The lamas clearly feel that we are quite incapable of putting the higher level instructions into practice. However, at each stage, the instructions must be given along with the wang kurs.

The initiate is expected to work through these practices in consultation with a knowledgeable lama who has had initiation to these particular practices. One monk informant told me that we had received instructions for at least the next thirty years of practice.

By this stage in the teachings most of the initiates are visibly exhausted. The initiation sequence has been physically challenging, but more importantly the Lam Drā has been a massive assault upon our consciousness. Our world-view, and consequently our sense of self, has been unremmitingly challenged, with logic, with our own meditations, and by a social context which very consciously admits nothing of our previous sense of self.

I find myself desperately longing for a day of freedom and when one occurs with a break in the teachings I flee Puruwala. The craving for an approximation of food is understandable, given the produce of the canteen in which we eat. Less understandable is my craving for anything which is "ordinary reality". I purchase and devour an issue of Time magazine, which mythology I cannot normally abide. In a bookstore in Dehra Dunn I find a "Bertie Wooster" novel by P.G. Woodhouse. The idyllic and gently hedonistic world of Woodhouse's aristocratic character is exactly what I crave - i.e. a known world.

But the return to Lam Drā is also a relief. The material world seems strangely synthetic - it seems odd to be among folk who share the delusion that it is real. At this point several initiates, including one westerner, take ordination as monks. Had I not been married I might well have joined them - at the time it seemed the only reasonable thing to do.

I have not had the opportunity to contact other Lam Drā participants and so cannot comment regarding their subsequent experience. I have, however, had the opportunity to discuss the aftermath of similar tantric training with a number of initiate practitioners and their experience generally accords with mine. One increasingly begins to see the phenomenal world as being of the nature of a dream. Concomitant with this, that world, or at least our perception of it, becomes increasingly plastic. One may be able to exercise control over the visual world for example, making objects disappear (they pop back into my visual field spontaneously). The separate reality produced in meditation and the phenomenal world begin to merge. Perhaps this is what was meant by the sage who commented:

> Before I began the path rocks were rocks and trees were trees.
>
> When I started on the path, rocks were no longer rocks and trees were no longer trees.
>
> Now that the path is completed rocks again are rocks and trees again are trees.

CHAPTER 10

Summary and Analysis - Tantric Epistemology

"During those years...., I began to understand that the goal of psychic development is the self. There is no linear evolution; there is only a circumambulation of the self. Uniform development exists, at most, only at the beginning; later, everything points toward the center"

(Carl Jung 1963:196-197)

The first part of this chapter will present a summary, and an "emic" analysis of the Lam Drā tantric system. I begin by examining, by way of illustration, the tantric refuge sadhana and describing associated phenomenology. I discuss short-term and long-term shifts in awareness as the result of tantric meditation practice.

In addition I will outline the distinguishing features of tantric imagery as well as the nature of the guru/chela relationship, and the concept and role of faith in tantra. Next we will analyse in turn, the concepts of purification and merit.

The vajra-body concept will be discussed with reference to its emic attributes and will be related to tantric epistemology.

In the second part of the chapter I will present an "etic" model of tantric epistemology beginning with a comparison of tantric with some western positivist and structuralist à priori assumptions.

Secondly I present a model of the ontological status of symbol with reference to concepts introduced in Chapter Two and we relate symbolism to transformations in consciousness.

Thirdly I present a model of the process whereby symbolic material used in the context of technique can be facilitative of short and long-term alterations in awareness.

It is not my intention here to present an "emic" and "etic" analysis in counterpoint. I am not,for example, going to attempt to present Tibetan phenomenology and hermeneutics on the one hand, and a western neurosecretive model on the other as an etic analysis. Rather, my goal in this chapter is to provide the reader with sets of "bridge concepts," one step removed from my ethnographic report. I will develop a model which may be ethnologically useful.

My presentation herein will emulate the pedagogical strategy employed by my teacher/informants. Each topic is introduced at a given level, to be returned to later at a higher level after other topics to be dealt with at the lower level have also been introduced. Thus I will build a conceptual "spiral staircase."

Tantric Sadhana

To begin, I noted a general increase in the complexity of the sets of symbols which initiates are asked to visualize. One begins with a single symbol (such as a skull-cup with its three segment lines clearly visible) and then one mentally expands that symbol by means gradual multiple-stage structural transformation into a more elaborate symbolic array.

As the more advanced practices are taught the initiates develop the ability to visualize, arising from that first symbol, first an increasingly complex deity, with many faces, arms, and legs, of a variety of specified colors, with an array of ornaments made of bone, and of jewels. Then that deity is visualized in sexual union with a "consort" visualized with similar complexity.

"Unfolded" from this symbolic array is a massive external mandala in the form of the protection cakra which represents for the initiate a complete external "universe of the deity."

Additionally of course, the tantric practitioner begins his or her sadhana (practice) by attempting to invoke Sunyata (the plenum void, or "emptiness"). From the perspective of normal waking state experience it is something of a contradiction to "visualize emptiness" but I will resolve this apparent contradiction later.

Practically speaking, the student is offered various imaging strategies. For example it is suggested that one might visualize one's body as being empty "like an empty tent," and then expand this symbolic field to encompass the universe, for example as in the typical sequence which follows:

1/ With the body seated in meditation posture, begin to imagine that your body is empty, "like an empty tent."

2/ next, imagine that the area surrounding you is empty (the room, if you are sitting indoors)

3/ expand (in stages) the emptiness such that you imagine first that the building, or larger surrounding area is empty.

4/ continue to visualize the city you are in or still larger surrounding area as empty, and then the valley or state, the country and continent and then the earth.

5/ imagine that the entire universe is now empty (you can do this in stages if you wish), so that there exists only emptiness (Sunyata).

Out of this symbolic field the student generates the initial symbol upon which the visualization in based. For example one might visualize the aforementioned "skull-cup with its three segment lines clearly visible" as in the Hevajra sadhana, or might visualize "an ocean of blue saphire, very flat and comfortable and peaceful and filling the whole universe" as in one of the Refuge Sadhanas offered to tantric initiates at Lam Drā.

This secondary symbol is then expanded as detail is added, for example, "imagine a wish-fulfilling tree in front of you." The symbolic array is built up gradually as in the following sequence which was offered in the above-mentioned Refuge sadhana:

1/ first the symbolic field "Sunyata" or "plenum void" is built up in several steps as already described.

2/ then one imagines an ocean of blue saphire, very flat and comfortable and peaceful and filling the whole universe.

3/ one imagines a wish-fulfilling tree in front of one.

4/ at the center of that tree is a four petalled rose-colored lotus.

5/ in the center of the lotus is a lion-supported throne.

6/ one imagines one's root guru seated on that throne in the form of Vajradhara.

7/ the deity is blue like the Autumn sky with one face and two hands. In his right hand he holds a five-pointed vajra and in his left is a golden bell.

8/ His hands are crossed at his chest so that the vajra and bell are also crossed.

9/ He is sitting cross-legged adorned with the major and minor saints and surrounded by the liniage gurus.

10/ Upon the front leaf of the lotus Sri Hevajra is heading all the deities.

11/ Upon the right petal is Buddha Sakyamuni surrounded by all the Buddhas of the ten directions.

12/ Upon the rear petal of the lotus are huge piles of dharma books.

13/ Upon the left petal is the "Bodhisattva Sangha." (i.e. the community of awakened beings who have elected to stay in Samsara in order to help all sentient beings.)

14/ We imagine that in front of the tree on the earth are our father on our right and mother on our left. One's self is imagined to be in the middle and in front of one are all sentient beings, headed by our enemies.

The Sadhana also links the visualization with Buddhist conceptual underpinnings as in the following sequence which continues from the above:

15/ One then thinks about the endless suffering of all sentient beings which will continue forever if they don't take the fruit which is being offered.

16/ One should think that the gods are not a perfect refuge because they are in Samsara themselves. The Hinayana Arahats have incomplete understanding, for they are not skilled in working for others.

17/ One should think that only this tree is a perfect refuge. Only this refuge combines the power and compassion.

18/ One maintains this thought of refuge and imagines that all sentient beings are also taking refuge.

19/ Now one should bow one's head and recite the refuge prayer

Specific phenomenological signs, and/or psycho-physiological cues are linked both conceptually, and methodologically with the visualization as follows:

20/ One should recite the refuge prayer until one has "signs," that is, until one's hairs stand on end, or tears begin to fall.

The initiate gradually dissolves the visualization as follows such that it leads to the experience of the symbolic field which is the goal of the practice:

21/ At this point rays of light from the Buddhas touch all beings and disperse all obstructions.

22/ All beings become Buddhas, and fly like birds to the buddha realms.

The meditation experience is associated with symbols which are a part of normal waking state experience. Thus an intermediary is established which bridges warps (transition points) across phases of consciousness (see Laughlin et al 1979) in the person of one's root guru.

23/ All of the components of the visualization become rays of light one after another, and vanish into one's root guru.

24/ One's root guru then vanishes into rays of light and disappears into one's head, filling one's whole body and becoming inseparable from one.

24/ At this point one meditates without further visualization for a short period.

From the perspective of "normal waking state experience" the semiotic structure of the above sadhana might look like the following analysis.

It is evident that in this sadhana an attempt is made to generate an empty symbolic field, i.e. an experience of consciousness without an object, or "pure" consciousness. The initiate's body is dissolved and then, in stages, the entire universe becomes emptiness, dissolving the dichotomies of self and other, inside and outside, etc.

Thus, while the tree is visualized as being in front of oneself, one's "self" is without spatial referent in emptiness. The visualization is a state of being which is not characterized as being internal or external to one's body, rather it is both.

It has already become evident that, to use our metaphor from Chapter Two, the stage in the theater of mind on which the ritual drama is played out is consciously and inevitably the human body. The ritual drama may be internalized by means of "self-arising" in which the initiate imagines himself to be the deity, or as the less difficult "front arising" in which he sees the deity as if from the front, or by the intermediate "top arising" where the deity is seated on top of the initiate's head. In any case, the visualization is intended to be a map of a mind state which is conceived to be a state of body, speech, and mind (to use the Buddhist trilogy).

From this "plenum void" (another term for Sunyata or emptiness) is generated a series of forms which expand out from that void, i.e. the refuge tree corresponding to the meditator's spinal chord, the lotus (explicitly recognized as a symbol for unfolding energy) at the heart center and so on.

As the sadhana progresses the visual array is increasingly "unfolded" spatially, and as elaboration of sub-categories of symbols until from the plenum void and its initial issue of wish-fulfilling tree and lotus there have arisen a symbolic pantheon which subsumes the full range of deities, each of which constitutes an aspect of Buddha, i.e. a "pure" aspect of mind (read "Jungian archetype").

Thus from emptiness or formless consciousness the meditator generates all of the archetypes of the consciousness of form.

In the sadhanas often used by advanced tantric practitioners this unfolding process typically involves an elaborate visualization, the present one being quite simple in comparison.

The advanced practitioner comes to "see," or more accurately, to experience in great detail his or her visualization as a stable image and is thus able to generate and to interact with the full symbolic array he has generated, each deity and other symbol available to consciousness.

The Experience of Sadhana

The experience can be extremely moving, and indeed awesome, the initiate's full awareness seeming to be absorbed in the symbolic field. The feeling is as if one had literally unfolded all of the elements of one's phenomenology and was experiencing their arising from the pure consciousness of Sunyata.

When the light emanates from all the Buddhas, touching all beings, dispersing all obstructions, and all beings are dispersed as Buddhas to the Buddha realms, the experience can be as if the benchmarks or anchors whereby the ego-based self is defined and confined have been eradicated. One is therefore able become further absorbed in the sadhana, becoming rather than watching the imagery.

In elaborate visualizations, during dissolution, each component as sub-category is absorbed into the more basic components or categories of experience in a very specific order.

This amounts to a "folding in" and re-integration of the images and experientially, of the mind-states associated with these symbols, and which they purport to trigger.

The various elements of the visualization are folded back into one's root guru who then is folded back into light, constituting pure visual form, which is absorbed into the top of one's head. At this point the skillful meditator may become aware of his body for the first time since beginning the visualization. The experience can be of the body as outline like the "empty tent" imagery used earlier and as composed of light or as I have already suggested, as an experience often described as "pure form."

As one continues to meditate without conscious manipulation of imagery, a range of images may arise spontaneously in the individual's awareness.

Generally though, at some point during this meditation the mundane experiences of the body begin to be represented in awareness. One becomes aware, sometimes with surprise, of one's kinesthetic "skanda," (element of consciousness) e.g. suddenly you notice you have a knee, and it seems to have been hurting, or you notice an itch and feel that perhaps you should scratch it eventually. Perhaps you notice a visual form or an odor and "watch" as that sensation is concatenated with others to form a familiar object. This may be experienced as either a "snapping into focus" of the phenomenon in question, or as the gradual building of focus. In either case, the practitioner's experience is of watching his ordinary world being re-created. One watches as the disparate sensory experiences concatenate to create one's ordinary phenomenological array.

My own experiences with this sort of practice seem to be consistent with those of a number of practitioners I have interviewed. At the end of such sessions I have experienced such "emptiness" or whatever approximation of it I am capable of engendering and have watched as basic forms have arisen. For example, I have become aware of only a seemingly pure color, or apparently single physical sensation, a single frequency of sound etc. and have continued to watch as that experience was joined by others, usually within the same sensory modality.

It is noteworthy that the initial experience of, for example, a single color is extremely intense in the sense that all that seems to exist is the color as an abstracted, or seemingly intensely "pure" phenomenon in and of itself. Similar experiences may be tied to physical sensations etc. It is as if one's very nature was the phenomenon in question, and the emergence in awareness of other phenomena is experienced as a splitting-off of the one's self.

I have experienced the gradual concatenation of experiences within, and then across sensory modalities, followed by an often sudden "snapping into focus" of those concatenated experiences as "known objects" or composite experiences: the telephone ringing, a meditation shrine, street noise, the objects in the room, physical sensations, particular affect, and so on.

The reader will doubtless observe that the experiences I describe are not unlike the disoriented state of mind of one suddenly awakened, the experience of emerging from the "hypnopompic" stage of sleep. I have discussed this question with a number of teaching Lamas, as well as lower-level initiate practitioners, and have examined my own related phenomenology. With the foregoing "authorities" I can state with some confidence that while there exist some similarities between the dream and pre- and post-dream states and the meditational (including pre- and post-meditational) states, both in the phenomenology and probable physiological concomitants, the experience is really quite different. This contention is also supported by psychophysiological research based upon electroencephalographic analysis of electrical activity in the brain during sleep, and during some types of meditation (e.g. Kasamatsu 1969, Anand 1969).

In fact, like most practitioners I have a basis for comparison ready-to-hand, having fallen asleep during long pujas on occasion. As a start, I can report that the meditation experience is not characterized by the confusion of the awakened sleeper, the mind feels clear, very much so. This may of course be attributed in part to the fact that the sadhana serves to modulate the warp between mind-states. That is, the transition between the meditative state "sunyata" and the "normal waking state" is modulated, slowed down, and cognized.

The disorientation experienced by the suddenly awakened sleeper may arise largely because the phenomenology which characterizes the transition state between deep sleep and the "normal waking state" which is called the "hypnopompic" (a state for which clear diagnostic criteria exist in the form of both physiological and phenomenological concomitants) may be momentarily merged with that of normal waking state awareness as a function of sudden awakening.

The hypnopompic is another warp between modes of consciousness which tantrists attempt to modulate and cognize. From the reports of my informants, and from my own meditative experience, it appears that the hypnopompic warp, and that which I have been describing arising from Sunyata are qualitatively different. The post-Sunyata warp is experienced as a rather detached watching of the mind putting its reality, including its experience of itself (its _self_), together.

This process takes place against an experiential backdrop characterized by detachment and a feeling which most informants describe as very great or crystalline "clarity." It is as if one were watching the images being formed in a mirror, knowing that they had no inherent substance. The motif is reminiscent of Lewis Carroll's looking glass scenario. One knows that the reality of the looking glass is not inherent but is entering that world which has its own logic appropriate for the particular type of mind-stuff of which it is made.

Like Alice, one also discovers that the mirror, once approached, draws one "in." Just as one cannot dissolve the reality of the mirror at will, but needs the sequenced images of the sadhana, so one cannot back off from the mirror once it has been approached again, nor apparently, can one avoid approaching indefinitely.

Correctly or not, the experienced initiate's phenomenology at this stage is convincingly that of having emerged from the plenum-void, Sunyata, or pure mind, into a phenomenal world of his own creation.

After a number of such experiences the initiate begins to cognize his sense-based "reality" as highly relative, as the "consensus reality" of non-meditators, or "ordinary people."

Hence the Tibetan terms "ordinary practitioner" and "extraordinary practitioner" come to mean those who perceive the phenomenal world as inherently existing, and those who experience it as a non-inherently existing construct of mind.

This having been said, I again caution the reader that my phenomenological descriptions, including those of my informants, are necessarily limited by the maturity of my own meditative practice. My lama informants are answering my questions with a view to teaching me, and in any event would not address experiences for which I am seen as having no experiential points of reference.

Several advanced practitioners have assured me that the experiences I have described here are but a hint of the depth of experience available to the adept.

Again, both my own experience as an initiate and the reports of my informants confirm this assertion. One experiences sadhanas as unfolding in stages, each qualitatively different from the last in the same sense that the "fish egg" experience alluded to earlier as an arising sign is different from that of attending to the sensation of one's breath at one's nostrils (an "outer sign").

I offer these descriptions of sadhana experience then, not as an exhaustive elucidation of the "deeper meaning" of this or any other meditation practice, but merely to indicate what sort of process appears to be involved.

High Tantra

Several other distinctly or predominantly tantric features characterize the higher teachings. The deities are typically not only presented within more complex symbolic arrays, but they are also more wrathful in aspect. The colors tend to be dark blue, or blue-black, they are adorned with ornaments of human bone, and crowns of skulls, are possessed of large canine teeth, and are described as "fierce" in attitude. In addition, the passive lotus-posture is exchanged for a more active "dancing" stance, and the deity is typically imaged in sexual union with the consort who is similar in aspect.

Very early in the tantric part of the teachings, the instructions begin to take a different form. As described in Chapter Eight there is first simply a conscious instruction to relax the body and to visualize the body as "empty." To this is added the injunction to chant the prayers as mantras and the initiates begin to associate particular colors with particular parts of the body. The first step in the transition to full "guru yoga" begins with visualizing one's root guru as the deity in taking refuge.

Guru Yoga

The students are introduced after they begin the tantric initiations to the idea that the lama is the vehicle, and that they must therefore be extremely careful to avoid defiling the vehicle with inappropriate thoughts about him.

Traditionally, it is explained, this guru/chela relationship was one of long term trust. It was thought necessary to build up this trust over a period of years, usually with the student living "in service" to the guru for some years prior to tantric initiation.

Thus, it is acknowledged in the instructions received that it is very difficult to see the guru as the Buddha. Nevertheless this view is considered to be absolutely essential for the student to progress in tantric practice.

This strain is addressed within the conceptual context of the concept of "power" (the term my teacher/informants use). It is suggested that the initiate has to develop a great deal of devotion in order to get meditational power. In this context the word power is associated with the notion that meditational efficacy is greatly enhanced by certainty regarding that efficacy on the part of the initiate.

At the same time, the strain is also recognized in the form of teachings regarding the problems which result from blind devotion.

The relationship is symbolized graphically when the students are "born" from the guru's genitalia as tantrikas. Further symbolizing the significance and danger implicit in tantric practice is the invocation of fierce "protectors" (Chapter Six)

Faith

Further recognition is given to the problem of faith by the lama who suggests that we must understand that this teaching cannot be comprehended "in the language of science." What he is suggesting is that we cannot understand these teachings within western scientific paradigms to which he and other Tibetan Lamas have been indirectly exposed. In other words, he is recognizing that one cannot validate Tantric hypotheses, or even understand them within a positivist framework.

Non-Dual Merging of Opposites

Finally in this early phase of tantra the initiates are introduced to the requirement of non-dually (i.e. without contradiction) holding two apparently contradictory views. One is asked to imagine a mind in which the clear and empty aspects are non-dually merged.

Intensification

In keeping with this general increase in the intensity of instruction and practice, the sadhana daily increases in complexity as more and more detailed visualization instructions are given. The mantras increase in length and number with the main mantra being about 100 syllables.

The sexual imagery becomes increasingly graphic. For example, in the refuge sadhana (Chapter Six) the initiates imagine that the semen generated by the union of Vajrasattva and consort fills them as a purification. In turn, the imagery relating to the exiting defilements is also visualized much more graphically as pus and blood and feces etc.

Mandala Imagery

The students are introduced to the tantric concept of mandala. It becomes clear that a mandala represents, and is designed as a portal to different universes of experience. The offering mandala is the mandala of "ordinary experience," which we create as "the world" upon the mirror-finish of pure mind, and then sweep away with an appropriate mantra and stroke of the hand. The offering mandala is differentiated from the "universe of the deity" which the initiate is to enter, or rather, become.

Almost as soon as the tantric teaching begins the initiates are given detailed explication regarding the earlier teaching that the "precious human body" is the vehicle for enlightenment. It is made clear that the body both embodies one's delusory reality, and has the potential to become the means for experiencing "truth." Throughout the teachings, human phenomenology is increasingly modelled with reference to the underlying "veins" and "airs" of the body.

Purification and Non-Attachment

Not only do the sadhanas become more complex in their structures, embodying vast arrays of symbols, but each meditation session also becomes more structurally complex, involving several different "tunings" of the initiate's consciousness. It is explained that one first takes refuge, and then does purification, followed by the mandala offering, followed by the invoking of the mandala of the deity, perhaps followed by specific psychophysical exercises (e.g. Vajra Yogini breathing exercises).

One of the lamas explains that the taking of refuge establishes the mind-state upon which the following meditations must be based. I would suggest that this is the first step in a process whereby the initiate aims to achieve detachment from "ordinary experience." The first step in this process of "letting go" is that of the Bodhisattva concept, of motivation based not upon personal benefit, but upon carefully cultivated altruism.

Thus the refuge meditation is a symbolic cutting-free from ego-based striving and from the ego-based self, and in this sense, represents the abandonment of one's reality.

Gaining Merit

The Vajrasattva, or purification meditation, is performed in order to "purify all the defilements, obscurations, and karma accumulated since beginningless time." It is a symbolic cutting off of mental inertia, of guilt, duty, and so on and is thus an attempt to symbolically cut free of negative affect. Thus the initiate imagines that he/she is now free of all "negative karma" which is synonymous with counter-productive mental inertia.

The mandala offering is done "in order to accumulate the vast merit needed to gain liberation." By representing ordinary consciousness in the form of hundreds of thousands of creations of the offering mandala, and sweeping it away hundreds of thousands of times the initiate produces **non-attachment**, ritually, and in reality, abandoning "ordinary reality." Thus the initiate symbolizes his letting-go of the view that the "world of the senses" or the symbolic field ("Buddha field") which I call the "normal waking state" is one in which inherently existing phenomena are experienced. It is emphasized that the Mandala Offering is needed to build the tremendous merit or appropriate mental inertia which is needed for liberation.

Three Levels of Non-Attachment

With these three steps, Refuge, Purification, and Gathering of Merit, the initiate has symbolized three levels of non-attachment without which liberation from Samsara (the "world of the senses") is not possible. By taking refuge he enacts his release from selfish motivation and striving. By means of the Vajrasattva meditation he enacts the release from emotional valences or "defilements." The mandala offering serves as a vehicle whereby he enacts his non-attachment to the symbolic field which is ordinary or normal waking state awareness.

Having thus produced the "Foundation-mind" the initiate proceeds to produce the Sunyata symbolic field and to construct the universe of the deity (the deity mandala).

The reader is reminded that in the course of initiation most schools of Tibetan Buddhism require that each of the aforementioned "Foundation Practices" must be performed at least one hundred thousand times as a precursor to tantric practice. I have been told by initiates and lamas of numerous instances where a guru has determined that the student has not generated the mind-state articulated by one or more of these practices, and has required the initiate to do them again. So by the time the initiate is involved in high tantra he or she is presumed to be able to take the mind efficiently through the sequence of "tuning" to produce the appropriate Foundation or preliminary mind-state.

We also see meditation presented as a skill which must be practiced like any other skill. It is explained for example that the "Blue Flower Meditation" which the students were doing functioned to develop steadiness of mind, but that it should now be set aside. The initiate is now instructed to employ that skill in the meditation upon the clear and the empty aspects of mind. Thus the teachings explicitly acknowledge that the meditation object was chosen not for any inherent sacred quality, but rather because of its pedagogical utility as a mental training device. I would argue that this is also true of many sacred objects in most religious traditions, from a tantric perspective.

The Vajra Body

As noted above, the sadhanas, including the Foundation practices, become increasingly elaborate and complex. The focus shifts ever more to the initiate's body as the stage upon which the ritual drama is enacted. It is first merely mentioned that one should sit upright because "if the body is straight then the veins will be straight" and then the link between mind and body is established in that "if the veins are straight the mind will be straight."

From this the students progress to detailed elucidation regarding the vein and air processes which underlie all phenomenology. Such an elucidation is not presented however until the initiates have created themselves in the form of the deity. That is to say, the practitioners first must create the mandala of the deity. Then they are introduced to the body mandala teachings.

The creation of the mandala of the deity is seen as "creating one's self in the form of the deity" but also as recognizing that one already is the deity. Much emphasis was placed on the idea that we must come to "really know" that we are the deity.

The practitioner dissolves his present body into Sunyata or emptiness (the plenum void). Then he imagines a symbol appearing at his heart center, a symbol which will be transformed into the deity and the universe of the deity. Initially he only imagines himself to be the deity in the deity's universe.

It is seen as extremely important that the practitioner learn to experience himself as "really and truly being Hevajra." Thus the tantric sadhana builds upon the tantric foundation described earlier in furthering the practitioner's detachment from his ordinary self, and ordinary reality. Instead he begins to experience himself as the process which is purported to be the symbolic encoding of the "correct view," of non-conditioned awareness of mind itself.

As I explained earlier, this epistemological system is predicated upon the premise that the "primary defilement" (or failure to apprehend the nature of mind) has as its consequence, the grasping of the self as an inherently existing phenomenon. The consequence of this further defilement consists in the tendency to grasp phenomena to the self, i.e. to build and maintain a mental map of reality which one also perceives as inherently existing. Thus the ego, or conditioned self is tied to a reality of its own making and both constitute a symbolic field or in Tibetan Buddhist terms, a Buddha field. Through the process of creation the practitioner learns to experience an alternate but initially parallel Buddha field. This self and this universe are still conditioned, and are indeed predicated upon, and allegorical to, the world-view of the "ordinary practitioner;" however the mandala of the deity is one in which the transformational rules are explicit. Ordinary reality is also a mandala, but the mandala of the deity is designed to fold in upon itself more readily through a sequence of structural transformations culminating in the goal symbolic field called Sunyata.

In this process the practitioner's experience of self and other is distilled to elemental form in a set of multi-vocal symbols which correspond initially to a relatively anthropomorphic body with pseudo geographic and architectural surrounds.

Later on he will experience himself as both the deity and as the mandala of the deity.

Step by step the practitioner maps his whole body, and indeed his entire phenomenological repertoire, on to the visualization.

For example, the parts of the celestial palace of the deity correspond to different parts of his own body. Not only is the practitioner's perception of identity altered such that he must experience himself as the deity but apparently contradictory sets of spatial referents are introduced as his body is identified with the mountain upon which the celestial palace is situated, with the architecture of the palace, and with the body of the deity, and with deities and other processes within the body of the deity. The initiate is expected to be able to maintain these images simultaneously.

The apparent incongruity of experiencing one's form as the protection cakra in which one is experiencing one's form as the geography of the sacred mountain in which one is experiencing one's form as the architectural structure in which one is experiencing one's form as a deity in which one is experiencing myriad other deities is explicitly meant to resolved in the mind state engendered by the practice. The mind which can accomplish this visualization is the mind which can experience the non-duality of Samsara and Nirvana or the non-dual merging of the clear and the empty aspects of mind.

Thus is the sensorium of the practitioner entrained in supplanting "ordinary" conditioned awareness with an elemental allegory which through a set of structural transformations may engender the experience of the symbolic field which is the goal of this practice. This experience according to one high lama informant is that of consciousness without an object, or pure consciousness. It is believed that only with continual experience of this mind state is it possible to come to see the real nature of mind, and consequently, of one's form and of the world - The Ultimate Mahamudra, - The Correct View.

After the student is able to create himself in the form of the deity and the deity's mandala he begins to do the meditations from the Vajra Body point of view, discussed in Chapters Nine and Ten.

It is explained in great detail how the entire phenomenal world is derived from the primordial delusion of the clear and the empty aspects of mind. The arising of the physical form is elucidated beginning with the central or Avadutti vein from which arise the Rasana and Lalana veins, and in turn, from those three primal forms arise a multitude of other veins. It is taught that it is due to these veins that outer appearances arise, that the form that consciousness takes is a function of the patterns of activation of different veins.

Building the Psycho-physical Map

Thus the entirety of phenomenal experience is mapped onto the psycho-physical body of the practitioner. Each of the primordial elements of experience (like "grasping" or "aversion") corresponds to a primordial body-structure and more complex composite phenomenology is attributed to more complex composite structures of veins which represent structural transformations upon the original trilogy (the Avadutti, Rasana, and Lalana veins physically, and correspondingly, the clear, and empty aspects of mind, and the merging of these two, metaphysically, also corresponding to the "seed syllables" or letters "OM," "AH," and "HUM," and the psychological primitives, Ignorance, Grasping, and Aversion).

These primordial physical, psychological and phenomenological structures are thought to be elaborated via structural transformation to form the physical body, and the phenomenological body as well as the entire world of appearances - the universe. The human physical body, the human experience of the body, the human mind, and all other realms of experience are presented as surface-level transforms predicated upon deep structure which at its lowest level consists in primary defilement (or original sin?).

The phenomenal world is mapped with reference to types of defilements, breaths, letters, veins, elements, diseases, spirits, and physical forms. Thus the universe of experience is seen as comprised of composite phenomena which constitute surface-level transformations of deep structures from which all physical forms and phenomenological forms are derived as structural transformations. The transformational laws are elucidated in the morphological pattern whereby the veins and airs elaborate to form the "world of the senses."

In practice this tantric view is operationalized with reference to energy structures called cakras in the human body which form its elemental structure. Thus the delusion of the clear, empty, and combination, aspects of mind produces the three main veins from which emerge myriad veins and vein-structures which comprise the cakras from which emerge physiological and phenomenological forms.

For teaching purposes these structures are visualized in the body as comprised of sets of deities, as in the 128 primary deities associated with the 64 petalled lotus of the naval cakra. It is believed that with much effort and repeated practice it is possible to manipulate the "airs" which move in the "veins" thus gaining control over one's experience. By "putting the air" into the various veins inside the body, it is taught that the practitioner will come to "see the thing which is activated by that letter," thus controlling the very basis of his phenomenological experience, and of his Cognized Environment.

The Vajra Body paradigm is elaborated further in terms of the teachings about diseases and spirit attacks, the implication being that one who controlled the mind could control these phenomena too.

The Vajra Body as Symbolic Control System

It is clear that the deity map of the body is intended as a symbolic control system. My teachers do not pretend to their tantric students that the deities which are to be visualized have inherent existence. The practitioner is expected to be able to experience the veins and elements as the "guna" or essence, the qualities of the deity, without having to have recourse to a pseudo-physical form. Thus it is apparent to the students that the deities are symbolic strategies for manipulating the airs in the vein structures.

Birth, Death and the Process of Creation

The teachings on the death process further elucidate the nature of mind and the purpose of the sadhana. Just as the process whereby our form, and all other external appearances come into being is described with reference to the vajra body, so the process whereby those forms are dissolved is described as the reverse of the former process.

The process whereby the form and universe of the deity is created, and the process whereby it is dissolved by means of the vein and air meditations, is paradigmic for the process whereby our "ordinary" form and universe of experience are created through conception and birth, and dissolved through death.

It should be noted here that one major difference between the main tantra offered at Lam Drā and other deity meditations was that the Hevajra practitioner maintains the image of himself as the deity when not practicing sadhana. He dissolves his mandala into sunyata when he goes to sleep, and "rises as the deity" etc.

The Self as the Vajra Body

The tantrica is expected to come to "understand that he really is the deity." The later practices whereby the "heat" and "air" meditations move the elements about in the body, eventually re-uniting the "white" and "red" elements, are performed upon the body of the deity which has become the practitioner's phenomenological body and represents the "clear aspect" of mind.

Thus the creation and dissolution of the mandala of the deity consists in a symbolic control strategy designed to facilitate the entrainment in the awareness of the practitioner of the symbolic field which is the "clear aspect of mind" experienced but seldom recognized during death, and consistent with the "attainment of the rainbow body" during life.

The students are repeatedly taught that tantra is the path of transmutation as opposed to that of renunciation. The process of creation is designed to transform and aggregate in the awareness of the practitioner the processes and elements of conditioned reality, his "ordinary" experience of self and reality into aggregate symbols which make cognizeable the process which underlies the construction of self and reality.

The relatively "impure base" of the "Foundation Hevajra" is transformed into the "pure base" of the "Path Hevajra" by means of a structural transformation of this system of aggregate symbols into the "Inner Mandala" consisting in the veins and airs which are purported to represent the deep structure of which the aggregate symbols are surface level transforms.

Having established in the awareness of the practitioner this symbolic paradigm, and having linked the paradigm in a variety of ways to all facets of the practitioners' awareness, through transformation of this symbolic field, he is now in a position to fold the paradigm back in upon itself, transforming and disentraining the models which constitute the objects of consciousness to generate the symbolic field upon which they are predicated, and according to my informants, to further penetrate to the experience of consciousness itself or consciousness without an object, Sunyata - the benchmark which is the criterion for epistemological objectivity, the basis for knowing.

Bridging Hermeneutics: A Model

I will point to the epistemological status of my analysis by demonstrating affinity between the Tibetan hermeneutic and one which western anthropologists are familiar with. Thus I will discuss the Tibetan hermeneutic with reference to western traditions of positivism and structuralism.

Secondly, I have referred throughout this work repeatedly to the concepts of "symbol" and "symbolic control." I have also expressed (in Chapter Two) my discomfort with the locus of structure implied (as epiphenomenon) by semiotic structuralists. Thus it behooves me to delineate a model which specifies the ontogenetic status of symbol and cognitive structure.

Finally, I shall present a model, contingent upon the above, which explicates the process whereby constellations of symbols presented in the practitioner's operational environment (Eo) may, under certain circumstances, function to facilitate dramatic and adaptive change in his cognitive capacity such that his experience of the world and of himself (in other words, his Ec) is radically altered in the direction of adaptive isomorphism with the operational environment (Eo).

Hermeneutics and Epistemological Strategy

In this section I will attempt to clarify the assumptions which underlie Buddhist Tantric epistemology and will draw a parallel between this hermeneutic and that of western structuralists in general terms. Where possible I will avoid laboring points raised in Chapter Two but will build our argument on the ideas presented therein.

My informants assume that our phenomenology is the product of unseen forces intrinsic to the nature of man. They would agree with the more recent functionalists in anthropology who see ritual as an attempt to address the needs of the unconscious mind which are antecedent to our experience of the world.

The position may be characterized, in western terms, as closest to structuralism and therefore as antithetical to the positivist orientation which currently dominates western science. Since this latter orientation is so much a part of western academic training that we tend to equate it with rational epistemology, it behooves us to distinguish clearly between the two positions.

Positivism

Positivism, as a general movement in eighteenth century philosophy, and then in science, finds its genesis in the writings of David Hume and of course formed the basis for the social science of Auguste Comte.

Positivism begins with the à priori assumption that sensory experience is the best source of knowledge.

This beginning assumption has as consequence the corollary that understanding can be derived only from empirical research. This is taken to mean that the phenomena which are observed by scientists must occur "outside" of their organism, based upon the assumption that consensual validation vis a vis "external" events is the most effective way of ensuring objectivity in observation.

Positivism implies a psychological theory regarding the development of consciousness in ontogeny. In its simplest form the theory states that humans come to know the world as the result of their experience of it. One accepts that there exists a "real world" and that our mental models are inevitably reflections (varying in accuracy) of that reality. The structure of mind reflects that structure which exists outside of mind, in nature.

Thus, at its most simplistic, the assumption is that the neonate mind is essentially "tabula rasa," a blank slate which is written upon by experience. As the young individual interacts with his or her environment, as a function of each encounter, he or she becomes more and more familiar with the naturally occurring patterns of phenomena which constitute that environment, i.e. with nature or "reality."

Thus the positivist believes that we base our mental maps of reality, our sets of expectations, and should of course base our formal epistemology, on these natural patterns as we discover them. All positivists agree that the external environment is the causal factor in the development of our perception and behaviour.

Logically, a corollary assumption is that the "external reality" which is being modeled must exist independently of the perceiving organism.

From the positivist perspective the epistemological benchmark against which individual Ec isomorphism with the Eo must be measured consists in probability statements based upon observed consistency in Ec events over time within individuals, and across individual Ec's. Consistent experience relevant to a phenomenon is the the cognitive equivalent to "reliability" in formal epistemology while consensual validation serves as the criterion for the "validity," or ontogenetic "realness" of the phenomenon in question.

Ultimately, the positivist is concerned to model external "reality" irrespective of the consciousness which perceives that reality. This is not of course to suggest that having done so, the positivist orientation precludes the study of consciousness, but it is studied then with reference to that external reality as benchmark.

In anthropology the positivist orientation is best reflected in Cultural Materialism, the proponents of which would prefer to limit the discipline to the study of "objectively" observable behaviour.

Structuralism

Structuralism too is a general movement in philosophy and science. This orientation is manifest in the work of Sigmund Freud in Psychology, Jean Piaget in Genetic Epistemology (developmental psychology, psychological and biological structuralism), Claude Levi-Strauss (semiotic structuralism), and D'Aquilly and Laughlin (biogenetic structuralism) in anthropology.

Structuralism's major philosophical antecedent is the work of Immanuel Kant. Kant argued that there exist structures which are innate in the human mind upon which our reality is necessarily predicated.

The corollary of this assumption is that the "reality" which each of us constructs is the result of a dialogue between environmental exigencies and the innate structure of mind. One assumes that there is some sort of reality out there, but one is incapable of knowing it with the directness implicit in the positivist orientation.

Where the positivist assumes that we "discover" reality, the structuralist assumes that it is the innate structure and process of mind which shapes our experience and gives it coherence. The logical consequence of this assumption is that we build our mental models not so much upon nature, as upon the structure of mind itself - the universe exists for us as a mirror of mind. The exploration of the mind with reference to "external" phenomena is logically equivalent to the exploration of nature with reference to "internal" phenomena.

Discovering "reality" becomes logically equivalent to, or at least contingent upon, discovering the nature of mind or "self."

Perhaps the best known psychological structuralist was Sigmund Freud to whom the west owes the recognition that our perception and behaviour are governed less by the phenomena and events of which we are consciously aware (either in our own minds or in the behaviour of others) than by phenomena and events in the unconscious mind which are generally hidden from both conscious and "objective" view and are antecedent to our experience of the world.

The nature of these "deep structures" as Chomsky calls them cannot be directly observed, but rather must be inferred by analysis of observable surface structural patterns. The surface structures in question are the thoughts and behaviors of ordinary experience.

For Freud the thoughts and behaviors of everyday existence which constitute surface structure are interspersed with "cross-points" where these two levels of phenomena intersect. The experiences of normal waking consciousness are occasionally interspersed with brief and informative glimpses of unconscious processes as manifest in slips of the tongue ("Freudian slips"), neurotic behaviour, dreams etc.

With regard to the process of scholastic analysis, it follows that structural models are not amenable to the sorts of tests of verification to which positivist research is oriented. You can't directly empirically verify a structural model.

This is not to suggest that structuralists are in any sense anti-empirical. All structuralists work from theory to data, attempting to verify their hypotheses with reference to actual behaviour. We do however have to accept that the structures themselves are not subject to direct verification since those structures are the result of our attempts to develop grammars of the unconscious mind.

Thus the structuralist builds models of what Chomsky calls "deep structure" which he uses to understand and predict that which can never be seen or known directly. These models are then applied as explanations of the antecedent processes which underlie the behaviors we observe. Such a model is validated or rejected with reference to its heuristic utility (just as are constructs in other disciplines like "inertia," "neurosis," "attitude," "gravity," "intelligence," "energy," "social class," or "matter.")

Ultimately the structuralist is concerned to model the nature of mind, the symbolic field on which all phenomenology consists in sets of transformations.

Tantra

It is clear that my Tibetan Lama teachers predicate their theory and technique upon the premise that much of our experience of "reality" is built-in. Further, it is clearly recognized that much of the structure of mind is innate to the human form or psychophysical body, although some is culturally conditioned, and some is the result of individual experience.

Since the tantric system is dedicated to effecting adaptive transformations in the Ec's of its practitioners it is hardly surprising that Tantric structural models take the form of sets of psychotrophic techniques designed to entrain in phenomenology the symbolic field upon which the initiate's ordinary world-view consists in a constellation of sets of transformations.

I postulate that all of these tantric systems of practice evolved because of their efficacy in enabling tantric adepts to produce, in their initiate students, sets of experiences consistent with those of the adept and consequently with the symbolic field which is the goal of tantric practice.

Thus, the Tibetan tantric meditation practice consists in a set of elements and lawful relations among elements which constitute a semiotic structural analysis. It is suggested that in order to reconstitute its full semiotic import the initiate must (to paraphrase Ricoeur - 1962) "allow it to think through him." Thus is the Tantric psychotrophic strategy an applied semiotic structuralism designed to produce the phenomenology related to the symbolic field which is the goal of analysis.

I mentioned earlier the psychological cross-points postulated by Sigmund Freud wherein "deep-structures" and ordinary experience intersect (e.g. dreams, slips of the tongue, etc.). Both Freud and Jung recognized that these glimpses of unconscious process could serve as "keys" to the plenum symbolic field upon which conscious experience is based. Both of these researchers recognized too that one might enhance that exploration and concomitantly increase the cognitive capacity and flexibility of the individual through repeated conscious induction of such cross-points (as in dream-based therapy, word-association strategies, etc.).

The reader will recall that in Chapter Five I introduced the notion that tantra is based upon the tenet that there can be created a set of "cosmic cross-points" (Mookerjee and Khanna 1977) wherein phenomenology (i.e. experience on the relative plane), and universal noumena intersect.

I suggest that these principles are analogous, differing primarily with regard to their presumed ontogenetic operating ranges. For the western psychoanalyst the experience of deep structure may serve as a "key" to the models underlying a particular psychopathology, rendering possible the adjustment of the individual's Ec in the direction of isomorphism with the "consensus reality" (or mean level of neurosis) for his culture.

My Tibetan teachers suggest that all conditioned realities, whether supported by cultural consensus or not, are by definition "neurotic," in that awareness which is not predicated upon the experience of "the ground of being," the nature of mind and consequently the nature of the experiencer, is per force illusory.

Thus tantrists present their initiates with structural models (e.g. deities and related technique) for the purpose of facilitating adaptive transformation of their phenomenology in the direction of isomorphism with the greater symbolic field called Nirvana.

For my tantric teachers as for western structuralists the ontological status of symbol is established as a transform on the underlying or "greater" symbolic field which constitutes the benchmark whereby reality may be known, or which in turn may serve as the key to other levels of knowing.

The Ontological Status of Symbolism

The purpose of this section is to discuss the symbolizing function with reference to the human mind-brain. In order to do this we must look at the process whereby the mind-brain interacts with the operational environment and constructs the constellation of models which comprisesour phenomenal experience, our Cognized Environment or Ec.

As I suggested in Chapter Two, the adaptive significance of the human mind-brain lies primarily in its function in building models relating to phenomenal activity in the sensorium of the organism. I referred to the constellation of models which are potentially active at any stage in ontogenesis as the organism's Cognized Environment or Ec.

I referred to the actual universe of phenomena which may in any way impinge upon the organism as the organism's Operational Environment or Eo. It was further specified that the operational environment consists in phenomena both internal and external to the organism.

The function of mind-brain then, is to construct an Ec which is adaptively isomorphic with the organism's Eo. Note that I don't imply that genuine isomorphism is possible, merely that degree of isomorphism consistent with feedback consistent with expectations implied by Ec models. In this sense we build what Wallace (1966) has called "secondary equivalence structures." The nervous system is finite in both its complexity and its range of potential strategies for organizing information. The operational environment on the other hand is presumed to extend beyond the modeling capacity of the organism both with regards to complexity and also with regard to potential systemic forms.

Thus adaptive isomorphism refers to that condition where the organism's Ec produces cognitive and physical responses which are adaptive for that organism (Laughlin et al 1981).

I referred to the models which are constructed by the mind-brain as "neurognostic models." Neurognosis was defined as the physiological activity which underlies the formation and maintenance of the Ec (Laughlin & d'Aquilly 1974, Laughlin & McManus 1975).

Laughlin, d'Aquilly, and McManus conceptualize a neurognostic model as consisting of a "network of axonic, dendritic, synaptic interconnections between afferent, efferent, and especially inter-neurons within a field of neural processes" (Laughlin et al 1981:213 see also Eccles 1970, 1973). I emphasized that these neurognostic models are neither wholly genetic in origin, nor are they wholly learned but rather are the product of cybernetic interaction between environmental exigencies (the Eo) and the cognitive and behavioral patterns innate in the human mind (Piaget 1971).

Laughlin, McManus, and Stevens (1981) suggest three generalizations which characterize neurognostic models. First, it is suggested that the range of sub-models entrained within a given cognitive act is a function of the complexity of that act. A complex cognitive function will involve a broad network of neural interconnections whereas a simple percept, for example, may entrain only "local" structures. The implication here is that complex conceptual operations are likely to involve activity over diverse areas of neural tissue.

Secondly, these authors suggest that in terms of function, such complex neurognostic models are organized hierarchically.

Such organization takes the form of a cybernetic process, and that this cybernetic hierarchy (Powers 1973) implies the existence of multiple orders of sub-models (primary, secondary, tertiary etc.) which are linked via superordinate models to form complex arrangements (Cunningham 1972, Hebb 1949, 1968). Thus, a single sensory or cognitive input may activate, or result in the entrainment of, a range of neurognostic sub-models. Similarly, particular sub-models may be entrained by one or more superordinate models.

Thirdly, Piaget and other students of human cognitive development have suggested that we may distinguish between two types of cognitive models, those which embody a motor component, and those which do not. Piaget has argued that those cognitive models which do not embody a motor component have evolved from motor oriented models in ontogenesis. Specifically, he argued that non-motor cognitive models represent structural transforms upon a field of "sensori-motor" models which form the basis for later consciousness (Piaget 1971, Piaget and Inhelder 1969, Bruner 1972, 1974). Piaget has further demonstrated that human cognition progresses through several distinct stages of cognitive morphology with each stage representing a set of structural transformations based upon the stage preceding it. Thus the individual's Ec at any given stage in ontogeny consists in "layered" sets of neurognostic models, each representing a set of structural transformations upon the preceding structure and potentially or actually forming the field of which higher-order models are structural transforms.

Fourthly, neurognostic models may be conceptualized on a continuum ranging from those which are predicated largely upon genetic predisposition and as such are inherently a part of the organism, and form a relatively fixed basis upon which consciousness is built, to those models which are extremely plastic and are readily modified through experience.

Within the above limits, neurognostic models are modified in interaction with the Eo in the direction of adaptive isomorphism with it through the process which I described as the empirical modification cycle (in Chapter Two). As stated in that chapter, the empirical modification cycle consists in a cybernetic process whereby projections equivalent to Seligman's "plans and images" (Seligman et al 1968) are evaluated in interaction with the Eo. The Ec is modified where salient differences are detected between expectations and Eo response (Laughlin and d'Aquili 1974). Models consonant with the empirical modification cycle of Laughlin and d'Aquili have also been proposed by Miller, Galanter, and Pribram ("TOTE" 1960), Piaget and Inhelder ("assimilation and accommodation" 1969), and Bruner ("constructive process" 1974) as well as in Whitehead's concept of "conformation" (1929).

Laughlin et al (1981) suggest that the intentionality (in the sense that Husserl uses the term 1970) of a given neurognostic process consists in the Eo process tracked by that model.

The Phenomenology of the Empirical Modification Cycle

We experience the empirical modification cycle (E.M.C.) through the process of recognition or remembering phenomena, or concommitantly through the process whereby we "make sense" of new experiences, fitting them to pre-existing phenomenal elements. Where the mind is not engaged in modelling in awareness those events which appear to be "external," the E.M.C. is manifest to us through fantasy, daydreaming, theorizing, etc. The E.M.C. is manifest through all of our attempts to "make sense" because all such cognition consists in the attempt to achieve Ec/Eo isomorphism.

Symbolism

If we are to understand the nature of symbolism it behooves us to concentrate first upon its ontogenetic locus. We have to develop models which are predicated upon stated and testable premises regarding the nature of symbolic events. I will briefly suggest an outline, consistent with my theoretical position which specifies the qualities which I hold to be common among all of those cognitive events which I would classify as symbolic.

To begin, let me restate the premise that the purpose of the human mind-brain (or its intentionality - Husserl 1970) is the modeling in consciousness of the operational environment. Human awareness constitutes only one sub-set of consciousness. The awareness component of consciousness evolved in a manner such as to enable the organism to deal with novelty. The primary function of awareness lies in enabling the organism to model internally and develop projections based upon incomplete data from the Eo. Complete data in this sense would consist in a full set of sensory concomitants involved in the feedforward/feedback process whereby neurognostic models evolve. That is to say, without this ability to model environmental events internally, generate feedforward internally, and project feedback internally, the organism must generate the feedforward/feedback E.M.C. cycle in external action.

It is in this ability to entrain, based upon partial information from the Eo the entirety of the relevant neurognosis, that man differs from less cognitively sophisticated species, if not in kind, at least in degree. Man's nervous system has developed, to a unique extent, the ability to infer from partial experience of phenomena, whole ranges of potential experience. In man, more than in any other creature, the whole Ec concommitant for a given Eo phenomena may be evoked by only partial sensory experience of the relevant process in the Eo. It is this inference of whole from part which constitutes the symbolizing function of mind brain and which defines its evolutionary significance (Piaget 1971, Piaget and Inhelder 1969, Miller et al 1960).

As I suggested earlier, neurognostic models are hierarchically organized in terms of multiple orders of entrainment. A given model or set of models may be entrained i.e. linked as subsystems in an array by sensory responses to events in the operational environment (outside of the organism, or internal to it) or may be entrained by another neurognostic model which forms part of the Ec.

Whether it is generated within the Ec or is externally derived from the Eo, I would suggest that the event which results in the entrainment of a broad range of neurognostic models is that which we refer to as a symbol. Clearly such a definition could be applied to an enormous range of cognitive phenomena. Most scholars studying "symbolism" are concerned with events and processes which parsimoniously evoke a broad range of cognitive models (Spiro 1969). Those events or stimuli which these scholars term symbolic are invariably broad in their scope of neurognostic entrainment, and consistent with this, are "multi-vocal" (Turner 1974) in that they entrain neurognostic models across semantic domains. I suggest however, that the symbolic process, as I have outlined it above, subsumes the conventional use of the term symbol as a special case which must be understood within the model of the broader function of which it is a sub-set.

A symbol then, relatively parsimoniously, evokes one or more Ec models across a relatively broad spectrum of intentionality. The symbols in which we are most interested are those which parsimoniously invoke or entrain broad ranges of neurognostic models across multiple levels of cognitive function. The process however is not different in kind to that whereby the Ec model of the whole is invoked from experience of the part in more mundane Ec function.

Symbolic entrainment may function within any sensory modality. Any sensory information, whether in response to events in the operational environment, or generated internally, may result in the complex, multi-level, entrainment of Ec models which constitute the symbolic function. The smell of gingerbread

(Sperber 1975), a rose colored light, a particular texture, a body position or gesture, or a particular pattern of sounds, etc. may all function as symbols.

I emphasize again that the symbolizing function is that mind-brain process whereby the whole is inferred from the part. The sorts of input to the sensorium which constitute the multivocal, highly evocative symbols in which most students of symbolism are interested may be conceived of as a special case subsumed within more mundane symbolic functions. Particularly of interest to anthropology are symbols which are far-ranging in their neurognostic entrainment, linking a variety of neurognostic models or sub-systems to form complex semiotic arrays.

Within this latter set, most interesting are those symbols which link neurognostic models across a range of semantic domains, those symbols which Turner has called "multi-vocal." In fact, it is with this latter set of symbols that most scholars in the field have been exclusively concerned, thereby losing the perspective necessary to develop a definition of symbolic function which embodies reference to the ontological nature of the process in which symbols take form.

At present we have not advanced sufficiently in the neurosciences to be able to fully describe the symbolizing function at the level of neural structure. Indeed, to do so would imply the development of a comprehensive paradigm for mind and brain. It is possible however, to point to known and relatively well understood neural functions which form the basis for symbolic activity.

Laughlin et al (1981) suggest that the symbolic function is contingent upon two fundamental processes in the nervous system (for the the data upon which these assumptions are based see Pribram 1971, and Geldard 1972). Firstly, our perceptual processes are characterized by **topographic projection.** This means that the pattern of sense receptor response is retained throughout the various stages in data-transmission which link the sense receptors to higher brain centers. For example, the pattern of light intensity, and wavelength (color) which is projected upon the retina of the eye produces responses (i.e. firing) on the part of the rod and cone cells which constitute the receptor array. This pattern of discharge among the rod and cone cells impacts directly upon the bi-polar cells which in turn impact upon the ganglial cells. These in turn are connected to the lateral geniculate body on either side of the thalamus. This latter structure constitutes a vast multi-functional "switchboard" at which level feedback from cortex may modulate visual functions in a number of ways (Geldard 1972, Lashley 1942, Hubel and Wiesel 1962). From the lateral geniculate body the pattern of stimulation is transmitted back to occipital cortex in both cerebral hemispheres. The pattern of activation which constitutes the retina's modelling of the operational environment is received by occipital cortex with **topographic** integrity. Thus at every level in the nervous system, a high degree of isomorphism is maintained between the topographic pattern of energy which constitutes the stimulus and the topographic organization of neural responses which constitutes our sensory model for that stimulus (Pribram 1971, Geldard 1972).

While our information is incomplete, this would appear to be the case for all sensory modalities. The auditory system would appear to be tonotopically organized (Woolsey and Walzl 1942, Rose and Woolsey 1949), our kinesthetic system somatotopic (Geldard 1972, Werner 1970, Mountcastle 1957), and there is evidence to support the contention that the olfactory system is similarly organized (Adrian 1951, Clark 1957). This means that the spatial patterns of sense neurons (e.g. rod and cone cells at the level of the retina, in the visual system) are replicated in terms of the spatial organization of response patterns of cortical neurons.

The patterns of stimulation transmitted to higher brain centers (primarily the cerebral cortex; Geldard 1972, Hubel and Wiesel 1962) is processed further by patterns of "detector cells" (Hubel and Wiesel 1962, Evans 1974). These cells and cell patterns serve a "keying function" (as opposed to the "feature detection" hypothesis advanced by Pribram 1971). Thus a given stimulus in the operational environment is responded to through a pattern recognition process whereby pattern detector cells organized in keying patterns (Laughlin et al 1981) match neurognostic models as keys to the code constituted by the pattern of data received from the senses.

We should note of course that early in ontogenesis such keys to stimulus patterns are to a great extent the basic genetic equipment of the organism, while the more complex Ec of the adult is comprised of models acquired through the E.M.C. which are n-generation transforms upon those basic models (which Piaget calls

"Schema"; 1971). Additionally, I must stress that the patterns of sensory data which constitute the sensory code may involve multiple modalities. I have discussed the process whereby Ec models are constructed and modified as the E.M.C. or Empirical Modification Cycle elsewhere (in Chapter Two).

Laughlin et al suggest that topographic projection provides the code for entry into the constellation of neurognostic models which constitutes the cognized environment (Laughlin et al 1981). A given pattern of sensory data is responded to either with recognition (re cognition) - entrainment of a model, or where the pattern cannot be keyed to a model it is stored in memory until additional data permits activation of a model (Pribram and McGuiness 1975).

If we conceptualize the symbolic function in this way, we must define the nature of symbol as that pattern of energy in the operational environment which produces a pattern of neural stimulation sufficient to activate a neurognostic model the intentionality of which embodies more information than than does the initiating pattern of energy. For our purposes, I would define the minimal symbolic function as that whereby a sensory stimulus evokes a neurognostic model such that the individual's cognitive/affective response to the stimulus is based upon more information than is actually contained in the stimulus array.

According to Laughlin et al (1981) the second fundamental neural process upon which symbolism is contingent is reciprocal inhibition. These authors suggest that the process called "inhibitory surround" whereby cortical neurons actively inhibit proximal neurons when they are activated may constitute the neural basis for the phenomenon whereby a neurognostic model, once evoked, actively inhibits the evocation of other models (Geldard 1972). This is the process which they argue underlies the "thing" intentionality discussed by Whitehead (1929). Thus are ranges of sensory patterns constituted as "objects" of consciousness.

It follows logically from the above model that one sensory pattern (or stimulus) may "call" more than one neurognostic model. Under some circumstances dissonance may be experienced where stimuli are ambiguous (Pribram 1971). However, it is generally the case that such ambiguity is resolved with reference to the context in which the symbol in question appears. For example, certain proxemic behaviors, i.e. the use of spatial proximity in social interaction could be interpreted as indicative of aggression or intimacy and yet most of us are easily able to analyze such behaviour correctly with reference to other aspects of the stimulus array.

It is also likely that a given neurognostic model may be evoked by more than one stimulus. Laughlin et al suggest that this feature is the "quintessential adaptive advantage of the symbolic function in phylogenesis" (1981:217). It is this aspect of the symbolic function which allows us to see the world as manifesting the "coherence and lawfulness" to which Thorpe (1965 - in Chapter Two) refers by permitting us to process information in terms of classes of phenomena.

Laughlin et al (1981) further postulate a basic drive which characterizes the Ec which they call the "cognitive imperative" (see also d'Aquily 1972; Laughlin and d'Aquily 1974). This is the drive embodied by the Ec process to form closure, to complete the cycle from sensory stimulation to model evocation. Such a drive is clearly indicated by the intensity of affect produced as the result of dissonance or by the rapidity with which our perceptual system forms closure when presented with ambiguous stimuli.

To reiterate then, the Ec consists in a vast constellation of neurognostic models developed though the E.M.C. which are evoked through a process of pattern recognition in response to input from the Eo. The sensory pattern gains entry to the Ec if it provides sufficient patterning such that a neurognostic model may act as key for that sensory pattern. The neurognostic model in question is likely to contain far more information than the sensory pattern which evokes it, and is likely to be evoked by a range of sensory patterns. Therein lies both the adaptive significance, and the nature of the symbolic function.

From this perspective the meaning of a given symbol may be specified as consisting in the intentionality of the set of neurognostic models for which that symbol acts as key (Laughlin et al 1981). The specific intentionality evoked by a symbol will be a function of context, as I suggested earlier, and may also be contingent upon the affective valence associated with the symbol's presentation.

The degree of Ec penetration by the symbol may be affected by the level of "orienting response" (Schwartz 1973:184) produced by the stimulus (which corresponds to E.E.G. arousal indications, and hippocampal synchrony; Madarasz and Donhoffer, 1959). I would argue that this factor largely explains why tantric sects from the Gnostic Christians to Tibetan Buddhists have placed a premium on stimulus novelty with regard the introduction of initiates to their objects of meditation. This notion implies that for example, a human skull when seen in a laboratory context may evoke quite mundane associations while that same stimulus when used in the context of an esoteric ritual might evoke both an alternate, and a broader range of meanings.

Additionally, Laughlin et al (1981) suggest that the "meaning" evoked by a given symbol is likely to be modulated by the level of cognitive complexity at which the individual is operating during its presentation (a contention supported by Harvey, Hunt, and Schroeder 1961). It is further suggested that all of the above factors may be a function of the context within the operational environment in which the symbol is presented.

As I pointed out earlier in the present work, the symbolic function's adaptive significance in allowing the organism to interact efficiently with the Eo, reducing the need for overt experimentation though by permitting the evocation of large and complex models in response to minimal stimuli also constitutes the major source of what my informants term "delusion;" - the misattribution of the whole from the part (see also Husserl 1931, Bergson 1907, Whitehead 1927).

My Tibetan informants echo Whitehead's (1927) example of the conjurer who through slight of hand, mirrors, and primarily through the sensitive manipulation of symbols, guides the minds of the audience to misinferences (from part to whole) based upon partial sensory information sufficient to gain entry to Ec models. Thus the symbolic function both facilitates adaptive interface with the operational environment, and may also act to trap awareness within a matrix of misattribution. This of course is precisely the argument my tantric informants have presented.

While not denying the adaptive significance of the symbolic function, they would argue that models such as the inherently existing "self," or any inherently existing "things," are maladaptive artifacts of that process, that an awareness constituted of symbolic abstraction deprives man of the direct experience of being, of existence in the immediate present, and consequently of the experience of his own nature.

Symbols and Experience

As I have used the term, "awareness" is that function of the Ec which is defined by our moment to moment experience of ourselves and our environment. The foregoing discussion and that presented in Chapter Two requires that we model the awareness process as the twin function of our orienting response to the operational environment and of an ongoing process of shifts in neural subsystems efficiently present in our processing of information about the operational environment which is produced in the cognized environment (Shearer et al 1977).

Our awareness function embodies a range of operating modes or phenomenological phases whereby the Ec structure is functionally transformed along with the organization of the information being processed by that structure. I suggested in

Chapter Two that phenomenological phases which are seen as salient within a particular culture will be cognized as such (e.g. "awake"/"asleep," "high," or "drunk") while those which are not salient within a particular cultural system may not be cognized at all (e.g. "samadhi," "jnana," and "!Kia" for most North Americans).

I suggested that western science or rather positivism is based largely upon the assumption that the "normal waking state" awareness mode is the only phase of awareness wherein veridical information may be obtained. I further suggested that most cultures are poly-phasic in their epistemological orientations (Bourguignon 1973), accepting the notion that veridical knowledge regarding the nature of man may only be attained through experience of the full range of modalities wherein Ec processes are accessible to awareness.

I introduced earlier the concept of "warp," referring to a point of transformation between phenomenological phases (the transition point between what some authors call "states of consciousness").

In this chapter I am interested in developing a model of the process whereby symbolic material may function to cause and to modulate transformations in awareness. Thus far we have approached a definition of symbol which will enable us to accomplish this end. I must, at this point, define what I mean by transformation or warps of phenomenological phases (or phases of awareness).

Phases of Consciousness

Sensory transformations consist in "changes in the information about the Eo reverberating within (the Ec)"(Laughlin et al 1981).

Laughlin et al define a surface transformation as constituting a change in the organization of neurognostic subsystems within a given level of systemic complexity (this would include what Goffman has called "moods").

Most relevant to our interests are developmental transformations wherein the level of complexity of the models which are manifest in awareness is increased or diminished (Laughlin et al 1981). Such a change in complexity may constitute a stable developmental stage (Piaget 1952), or may represent a momentary shift, and may be general in scope, or specific to certain classes of stimulus as with Piaget's upward decollage (Piaget 1952, McManus 1978). In ontogeny, as suggested earlier, the development of the individual awareness may be conceptualized as passing through a vast set of sensory transformations embedded within a set of surface transformations embedded within short-term developmental transformations which are precursors to a well-defined and universal set of long-term developmental transformations (e.g. Piaget's stages of cognitive development; 1952).

Any of the above phase warps may be, but are not necessarily cognized. I have suggested that societies attempt to modulate and cognize quite different sorts of phase warps. The So of Northern Uganda place great emphasis upon the transition from the waking to sleeping phases (Charles Laughlin 1978 - personal communication) where my Tibetan informants modulate warps among a variety of ritual-derived phases as well as several stages of sleep. We might suggest that the Yanomamo puberty rite-of-passage constitutes an attempt to modulate and cognize the warp between what Piaget would call the "concrete operational" and "formal operational" phases.

All cultures recognize that information is transferable across phase warps (Bourgignon 1973). That is, information structured in one phase of awareness may be represented within the phenomenological framework of another phase. This phenomenon which I discussed earlier has been called "cross-phasing" by Laughlin et al (Laughlin, Shearer, and McManus, n.d.). Experiences recalled after exiting a trance state, remembered dream experiences, and post-hypnotic suggestion, some post-meditation memories etc. are all examples of cross phase transference of information, or cross-phasing.

I have suggested that it is the process whereby the warps among phases of awareness are controlled and cognized which is mediated by ritual through symbolic control systems.

Such control systems are seen as epistemologically essential in cultural systems (e.g. the Senoi, the So, the Papago, the Mohave, and the Tibetans, see Laughlin et al 1978) which base their strategies for knowing upon the assumption that knowledge of the nature of man's universe must be derived from the full range of cognitive modalities in which he has the poential to experience it. Typically a distinction is made between those states which characterize "ordinary awareness," and those which constitute "extraordinary" experience. Such an orientation is virtually universal among non-western societies (Bourgignon 1973). In all cultural systems regarding which the author has been able to obtain information ritual serves as the mechanism whereby the parameters and extension of transformation in the neurognostic structures which underlie transformations in awareness are modulated (Lex 1974, 1978).

As I suggested earlier, ritual also serves to facilitate cross-phase transfer of information, and because rituals are embedded within a cultural hermeneutic they also form the basis whereby cross-phase information may be integrated in the Ec of the individual. It is this process of cross-phase integration to which the Tibetan tantric psycho-technologies are oriented (e.g. see Lama Govinda; Creative Meditation and Multi-Dimensional Consciousness; 1976).

This process of integration embodies four sub-processes (Laughlin et al 1981). First of all, symbols introduced in the context of a given phase of awareness may serve to control experience within another phase. For example, a Christian practitioner involved in constant prayer to the Virgin Mary may dream that the Virgin appears to him. Secondly, unconscious processes may have as a consequence the arising in awareness of symbols or constellations of symbols reflecting "deeper" level alterations in the intentionality of neurognostic models. For example, an individual may spontaneously experience the appearance of a deity in trance or dream state without having sought that experience, or any sort of extraordinary phenomenology.

Cultures also consciously organize the presentation of symbolic material in order to effect permanent changes in the operating structures which underlie consciousness.

Rites of passage are a case in point - cultures ritually introduce and control certain experiences in order to bring about transformations in the Ec of their members. Through the use of ritual devices, the manipulation of phenomenology can lead to stable re-structuring of the operating structures which underlie awareness. The Yanomamo youth "becomes" a man i.e. comes to embody the worldview of an adult Yanomamo male, the Tibetan youth "becomes" a monk i.e. embodies the world view of a Tibetan monk, or the tantric initiate "becomes" the deity.

Finally, cross-phase experience provides material for conscious reflection. It is possible that "normal waking-phase" reflection upon alternate phase experience may facilitate the integration of (neurognostic) models which underlie that alternate phase in waking phase awareness. While such change is clearly a universal human potential, profound changes are more likely where the individual embraces a hermeneutic conducive to such integration.

Laughlin et al (1981 - upon whose formulations the above taxonomy is based) suggest that in North American cultures very few individuals manifest other than the relatively passive arising of symbolic material as the result of unconscious processes.

My personal experience confirms this contention. When I am introduced as an anthropologist doing this sort of research I often receive "confessions" - accounts of mystical or transpersonal experiences. Most of the westerners who tell me about these experiences see them as noteworthy, but make no attempt to integrate them into a world-view. Most express the concern that such a world view would mark them as mentally unstable, and as consequence, do not usually speak of the experiences. Over the last eight years I have listened to so many such accounts that I am inclined to believe that most North Americans have experiences which would be labeled as transpersonally signifigant by my Tibetan informants.

Westerners "know" that such experiences are not "real." It is consequently difficult for western scholars to recognize that a majority of other cultural and sub-cultural systems enhance the individuals' experience and integration of multiple phases of consciousness, and encourage discussion and reflection upon each stage in the process whereby that integration is sought (Barbeau 1958, Stewart 1951, Devereux 1966, Bourgignon 1973, Laughlin, Shearer, and McManus, n.d.)

Symbols and Ritual Transformation

I postulate that meditation systems have evolved within virtually all cultures because they are effective in facilitating access to experiences which, minimally, are seen as related in kind to the target symbolic fields (e.g. sunyata) which I have already discussed.

Such ritual systems as those discussed in the present work are self-consciously predicated upon the assumption that it is possible to enhance phenomenological understanding (involving radical alterations in experience) and eventual structural penetration (involving long-term neurognostic reorganization) with regard to symbolic fields which constitute "higher" or more veridical cognized environment configurations than those which are manifest in ordinary, culturally and idiosyncratically conditioned awareness.

Within the technique, symbolic material is presented and manipulated in the individual's Eo with the express purpose of activating and modulating warps between phases of consciousness. The underlying assumption is that the cognitive capacity of the practitioner may be expanded through the integration in consciousness of information and through that vehicle, operating structures specific to alternate phases.

With Webber (1979) I will label as "Penetration Signs" those signs which "are able to move quickly through and bridge multiple levels of models - many of which would not be consciously available to the Ec." By Webber's definition, a penetration sign may, contingent upon a variety of factors, evoke "inner signs" which will in turn, activate genetically coded models upon which structural modifications of the practitioner's cognized environment will be predicated.

Symbol and Sign

At this point in my discussion it will be necessary to distinguish between symbol and sign. These two concepts are usually differentiated with reference to narrow/broad range of meaning, univocality/multivocality, specificity/arbitrariness of meaning, etc. (Turner 1975, Sperber 1975, Ricoeur 1967, Schutz 1964, Piaget and Inhelder 1969). I would suggest, in concert with Laughlin et al (1981) and Webber (1979) that a sign is an evolutionarily specialized symbol. In this sense, "a sign is specialized for participation as a unit (of activity) in a greater symbolic system" (Laughlin et al 1981:223). Particular symbols are used within a lexicon of symbols to enhance the production in the practitioner's awareness of the target symbolic field. If it is the case that these symbols (i.e. figures of deities, particular colors or sound patterns) function as relatively univocal and specific sub-sets of the target symbolic field (e.g. sunyata) then such specialized symbols may be classified as "signs" relative to the target symbol.

For example within the Tibetan pantheon, and within the array of non-deity based practices we see the same lexicon of specialized sensory signs (e.g. "mudra" or physical posture, specific colors) being used in different combinations, in different symbolic contexts, to direct the awareness of the practitioner toward different alternate phase experiences. These experiences constitute sub-set symbols of the symbolic field which is the benchmark to which I have referred.

Symbolic Penetration

Minimally then, a penetration technique (Webber 1979) may be defined as one wherein a set of signs is used to entrain in the consciousness of the practitioner models constituting a greater symbolic field. The parameters which define the greater symbolic field will be a function of the cultural hermeneutic (e.g. Buddhist philosophy and metaphysics) within the context of which the practice is performed, and possibly of sub-cultural (e.g. tantra), and idiosyncratic hermeneutics (e.g. "lama teaching") as well.

It is apparent from my discussion of the Hevajra sadhana and the hermeneutic associated with it that my informants believe that repeated presentation of the signs in question within the context of a specific set of techniques will, contingent upon the mental state of the practitioner, allow him to penetrate phenomenologically to the greater symbolic field which is described as one wherein Samsara (the world of illusion), and Nirvana (clear undifferentiated awareness) are fully integrated and may be experienced as a single symbolic field.

My informants teach that this experience is inherently within the capacity of all humans. They argue, as the reader will recall, that short-term adaptation, and enculturation, represent canalizing pressures and conditioning upon which are predicated nested sets of "wrong views" which build upon each other, and collectively constitute Samsaric consciousness.

From this perspective, what the penetration technique is designed to do is entrain "deep" models which comprise a greater symbolic field which is inherently potential in man. In the case of the practices described in the present work that greater symbolic field, when fully entrained in the Ec, constitutes the "Buddha Nature" which is potentially manifest in all humans.

Inner Signs

I suggest here, that the deity and associated techniques have developed over time because these particular signs have been demonstrated to be efficacious codes for the keying and activation (i.e. entrainment in consciousness) of deep genetically based models which constitute the target symbolic field.

This hypothesis embodies the corollary hypothesis that the "outer sign" as presented to the practitioner must be keyed in some way to "inner" or genetically based universal signs. I postulate that outer signs represent the cultural, sub-cultural, and perhaps idiosyncratic transforms of genetically based universal signs. For example, focussing the mind on the breath at the nostrils (the "outer sign") does, for many individuals yield spontaneously, the arising of an "inner sign" which may be described variously as "crystalline structure," "fish eggs," "crystal network," - an experience which obtains cross-culturally and appears to be genetically potential in homo sapiens (I base this suggestion on my own fieldwork and on Webber 1979) .

This experience whereby the outer sign is displaced in awareness by the universal sign is called by my informants "Jnana," a Pali term which translates as "absorption." The practitioner's initial goal is Jnana with the meditation object. Depending upon the particular path of training, a variety of meditation objects may be employed, ranging from the meditation upon the breath (actually a complex set of meditations, e.g. Anapanusatti) to that upon the blue flower described earlier, to the "Kasina" meditations upon the four elements (earth, air, fire, water) to meditation objects created through deity sadhanas.

The practitioner then, begins a practice by meditating upon an external or outer sign presented to him by the meditation teacher in the context of wang kur and subsequent instruction. The outer sign may be presented through the use of a thanka (picture) or may be verbally described.

In traditional pedagogy the dynamic aspect of the outer sign has, of course, always been described verbally (although one lama informant commented that western television cartoons would be a marvelous tool for the creation of dynamic thankas). In my experience, thankas are seldom used as a major strategy for presentation of the outer sign.

My teachers have preferred that the student image the outer sign idiosyncratically. In fact, four Lamas from whom I received different sets of initiations all emphasized that while certain attributes of the deity image were important such as the diamond-like clarity of Vajrasattva, or the objects held within Avalokitesvara's four hands, some aspects were best imaged according to the individual's cultural and personal proclivities. For example, Avalokitesvara is always seen as pure white in color, but may, according to the practitioner's predilections be visualized with oriental or caucasian features.

Clearly my informants see the anthropomorphic image as a "carrier" for the presentation in the Ec of the specific signs designed to evoke universal experiences.

The practitioner is expected to internalize the meditation object, to create a mental image of the object, and then meditate upon that internal image of the outer sign. With Webber (1979) I will refer to that internal image as the "inner sign." The inner sign is simply a phenomenological array, perhaps involving several sensory modalities (the reader will recall the instructions to hear, see, taste, feel, and smell the deity) which is the practitioner's relatively stable mental representation of the outer sign. The inner sign is initially of the same order as one's image of an inanimate physical object, like a chair. With further teaching and practice, the inner sign becomes more complex, embodying specified affect, and dynamism. The inner image may be elaborated until it becomes of the order of a person with whom we are intimately involved.

It is noteworthy that the inner sign is likely to differ from practitioner to practitioner in certain respects. It is possible for example, that one may only be able to image part of the outer sign, or that particular surface transformations may be evident in the internal duplicate. A particular sub-sign may be emphasized or "focussed upon" in the internal image. For example, the crystal mala (rosary) in Avalokitesvara's right hand may dramatically stand out from other aspects of the symbolic array. Alternatively the rose-colored lotus in his left hand may be highlighted. My informants treat these alterations as reflections of deeper psychological processes. Dependent upon the nature of the alterations in the internal duplicate, the student may be given instructions whereby he may create a more complete or balance duplicate, may be told to ignore the differences between the outer sign and internal duplicate, or may be instructed to focus the mind upon the aspects of the array which are emphasized.

When the practitioner is able to experience the full breadth of the prescribed visualizations and has, in the case of Lam Drā, created himself as the deity, he has completed the Path of Creation. Next will begin the Path of Completion.

Arising Signs

After repeated interactions with the inner sign, it may suddenly, and spontaneously transform into a radically different sort of sign. Such a sign may involve visual, olfactory, kinesthetic, or auditory experience and is characterized by its affective intensity (Webber 1979, Laughlin, McManus, Rubinstein, and Shearer 1984, Laughlin, McManus and Webber 1979, Shearer, Laughlin and McManus, 1977).

For example, one might experience the crystalline network mentioned above, or might have an auditory experience such as the "music of the spheres" described by Pythagoras. In any case, it is a characteristic of such phenomena that they are experienced as affectively profound, and as derived from realms of being which do not form a part of the practitioner's "ordinary" reality (Webber 1979, Shearer, Laughlin, and McManus, 1977, Laughlin, McManus, Rubinstein, and Shearer, 1984).

I would suggest, in concert with Laughlin et al (1984), and Webber (1979) that both the outer sign, and the inner sign represent different levels of cultural translation of the universal sign.

For example, we find the cross symbolism in a number of cultures, that symbol being much older than Christianity. In Christian practice the outer sign may be a wooden cross, a tantric Buddhist may use the visvavajra (two dorjes, or vajras superimposed and crossed). Jung (1959, see also Guenon 1958) has postulated that phenomenology (which I would call the universal sign) may arise in response to this sign which is associated with cross-phase integration, or in Jung's terms, individuation (see Laughlin, McManus, and Webber, 1979).

The universal sign which arises in response to meditation upon the inner sign is called by my informants an "arising sign," - hence, this is the practice of "arising yoga." With the arising of the universal sign, the Path of Completion begins. Understandably, no specific teachings are offered regarding the attributes of the universal sign. It is considered necessary that the practitioner should invoke it through his own efforts. My informants emphasize that this stage, although it may take years of diligent practice to reach, and may not be reached by all practitioners, is only the beginning.

In some practitioners, those who my informants class as of "superior ability," absorption into the universal or arising sign may lead to the experience of sunyata, a clear awareness which my informants confirm is that of "pure consciousness," or consciousness without an object.

This experience corresponds to "mind only" in the Buddhist tradition, "Atman" in the Hindu tradition, and "God" in the Judeo-Christian tradition. This final transformation in consciousness is the target symbolic field, the "ground of being," and the benchmark from which perspective both Samsara and Nirvana are seen as semantically equivalent fallacies.

The Mechanism of Penetration

I must still elucidate the mechanism whereby symbolic penetration occurs. I begin by pointing to neurological research which indicates that specific sensory images are stored as neurognostic models in the brain (Luria 1966, Hoff and Potzl 1930, Penfield 1975). One's ability to "hear" a remembered tune, or "smell" a memory, "see" a remembered place or person consists in the entrainment of neurognostic models in awareness.

Alternatively, though not necessarily as functionally equivalent, one might, as in the case of Penfield's or Hoff and Potzl's experiments, directly stimulate particular areas of the cortex.

At this stage in my argument it will be advantageous to recall earlier arguments regarding the nature of the symbolic function and the genesis of the Ec. The reader will recall my suggestion that the symbolic function's adaptive significance in minimizing overt experimentation on part of the organism by permitting the evocation of large and complex neurognostic models in response to minimal stimuli is also the major source of misattribution (or what my informants call "delusion").

Most concretely this property of mind results in the sorts of cognitive error which the magician exploits (Whitehead 1927). However, the implications are vastly more far reaching than this.

As I suggested earlier, as the Ec develops in ontogeny, neurognostic models inherent in Homo sapiens form the basis for the operation of the empirical modification cycle whereby the further neurognostic transformations occur. At the earliest stages in cognitive development (e.g. Piaget's preoperational stage) models are constructed primarily with reference to sensory stimuli in interaction with genetically based models for perception and action. In other words, the forms of such models are closely tied to patterns in the operational environment through overt action (Piaget 1952, 1971).

Each developmental stage is predicated upon a set of transformations wherein the level of complexity and pattern of integration of the models which comprise the cognized environment is enhanced. At each stage in this developmental sequence the models are progressively distanced from Eo patterns, being based increasingly upon interactions among Ec models.

Thus while symbols embedded at early stages in ontogeny tend to embody relatively univalent, and unidimensional intentionality, those embedded at later stages in ontogeny at higher levels of cognitive structural complexity tend to be highly polyvalent, and embody multidimensional intentionality (Laughlin et al 1981).

As Piaget and Inhelder have so cogently argued, as the Ec elaborates in this fashion it is increasingly independent of information from the operational environment such that at an early age human beings are able to evoke models independently of environmental stimuli (Piaget and Inhelder 1969:80).

As consequence the Ec is increasingly comprised in models derived from stimulus-independent interaction among models. Logically, as a consequence of this, symbols develop, "the evocative fields of which contain the intentionalities of other secondary symbols" (Laughlin et al 1981:219).

If to this formulation we add consideration of the process discussed earlier whereby at each level of model formation intentionality is canalized through reciprocal inhibition of models it becomes apparent that the cognized environment of an adult human is predicated upon a vast inhibitory network which precludes the entrainment of the basic models which define human consciousness in the awareness of the individual and which are themselves predicated upon the symbolic field which defines the nature of being.

Husserl (1931), Bergson (1907), and Whitehead (1927) recognized that elaborate Ecs predicated upon nested sequences of inferences from part to whole must necessarily compound potential errors in inference. The adult human cognized environment or world view consists, from this pespective, in multiple interdependent constellations of such compound errors.

As such one may reasonably speak of hierarchical concatenations of symbols evoking intentionality which constitute vast matrices of misattributions. My Tibetan informants would argue that the perception of an inherently existing universe, or of an inherently existing "self" constitutes such a compound error.

Thus the same process which underlies the short-term illusions of the magician also forms the the basis for the magic show which is Samsara - the world of illusion.

From this perspective, the task of the practitioner is to act upon the Ec in such a manner as to facilitate the entrainment of the latent models which underlie it. The point of transformation of the inner sign to the universal sign represents the entrainment of latent models which constitute the universal basis for human consciousness.

The present work does not purport to offer a neurophysiological model of symbolic penetration. However, I can outline certain basic mechanisms which underlie the process whereby inner signs may serve to entrain universal signs. I can also speculate regarding the physiological basis for short and long-term change in the Ec as a function of the entrainment of genetically coded universal models in awareness.

As Laughlin et al (1979) suggest, while we experience the outer and inner signs as distinct, the neural processes which underlie the experiences are less so. The cortical structures and processes underlying the experience are essentially the same in either case. The primary difference between these phenomena lies in the phenomenological context within which the image is activated.

The model for experience which is activated by stimuli, either from the Eo or from within the Ec is, by definition, a reverberative system. It is activated or entrained by the stimulus, and embodies the capacity to excite itself as a function of the recursive feedback loop which is anatomically a part of any neurognostic model.

As a function of the model's development via the E.M.C. the period of self-excitation is limited, and in the absence of further afferent excitation the model will be disentrained as auto-excitation diminishes. Functionally then, a given model keys to an afferent stimulus pattern and then autoreverberates as long as that stimulus pattern is present.

The skill which the tantric practitioner develops is that of constructing the internal duplicate of the outer sign, which I have discussed as the "the inner sign." Through lengthy and persistent repetition of the practice he trains the mind/brain to activate internally and maintain activation of the model for considerable periods of time. Hence the model becomes "autoreverberative" (Laughlin et al 1979). As I have suggested repeatedly, this is a skill which is considered to be prerequisite to serious tantric practice.

Webber (1979) suggests that as a function of repeated entrainment, the inner sign attains higher degrees of isomorphism with the keying requirements of the latent model which it is designed to activate, an assertion with which Laughlin et al (1979:note 2) agree. I observed within my own training that the internalized forms tend to complete themselves and that the qualities of the inner sign alter in the direction of what appears to be ideal form, eliminating imperfections which may have been present in the outer sign.

The experience is akin to one wherein an outer sign, perhaps a rough drawing, is duplicated in awareness, initially as a literal model of the rough form. Over time the image refines, its flaws disappear, becoming an idealized model of the outer sign. Over time that image changes further, and may in fact be altered quite dramatically. Especially, the image tends to become visually and affectively "radiant," perhaps more intense than ordinary sense-derived percepts.

I discussed this phenomenon with several informants at different levels of practice who reported that this had also been their experience. Laughlin et al (1979: note 2) report confirmation of this point as well. One lama with whom I discussed the matter told me that the classic tantric meditation texts say that the internalized image tends to perfect itself and "come to life."

Laughlin et al (1979) suggest that this change in the model of the inner sign is a function of that keying process whereby the model is increasingly influenced by the neurognostic structure for which it is the key (Jung calls this deeper model an archetype). I would suggest that the repeated folding-out and folding-in of symbolic arrays which I have described herein may be understood as a strategy to enhance this keying process. Such a technique may also serve to focus the entrainment process such that a deep level universal sign underlying a broad spectrum of Ec structures may be entrained.

The technique may work through progessive entrainment of high-order models (the folding-out) followed by progressive sequenced dis-entrainment (the folding-in) which is a symbolic allegory for the desired neurocognitive dis-entrainment.

I would further suggest that the increased complexity of tantric sadhanas constitutes a dis-entrainment strategy in itself. The vast sadhanas wherein one progressively unfolds complex arrays of signs, can only be performed if all other competing models (e.g. those normally entrained by percepts regarding the Eo) are dis-entrained.

Symbolic penetration then is the process whereby repeated activation of the inner sign model, perhaps aided by the symbolic dis-entrainment of higher-order models (and consequent de-activation of their inhibitory function) is used to entrain the deeper universal sign model.

The entrainment of the universal sign in awareness is the result of a process whereby the inner sign is modified in the direction of increasing isomorphism to the keying requirements of the universal sign. The experience as the universal sign which is entrained in awareness is that of complete integration of the practitioner's awareness with the universal sign. In other words, one experiences the particular element of awareness which is the universal sign as one's entire phenomenology.

The process whereby symbolic penetration occurs may be modelled as follows.

I have described a system in which symbols combined with technique are introduced into the cognized environment of the initiate such that deep genetically coded neurognostic models which collectively represent the innate cognitive potential in man are activated and potentially integrated in his awareness. I postulate that such activation of primordial models which are normally extrinsic to the Ec produces changes in the brain chemistry of the practitioner resulting in long-term structural alterations in the Ec.

The Structure of Practice

Broadly speaking we can describe the system of practice and result with reference to phenomenological phases.

1/ PURIFICATION: Through the Foundation Practices at the beginning of each meditation session the practitioner ritually enacts three levels of "non-attachment," dissolving the phenomenal world and generating an approximation of sunyata. This phase of consciousness is referred to by my teacher/informants as the "Foundation Mind."

2/ INTRODUCTION OF OUTER SIGN: An outer sign is introduced in the practitioner's operational environment. Such a sign may be as apparently elementary as a particular method of attending to the rise and fall of the breath, or a kasina meditation, or a complex sadhana such as the deity sadhana described herein.

3/ CREATION OF INNER SIGN: The outer sign is duplicated internally in the Ec of the practitioner who proceeds to focus the mind upon this "inner sign" as it elaborates and becomes stable.

4/ EVOCATION AND JNANA WITH UNIVERSAL SIGN: After sustained meditation upon the inner sign there may arise in the awareness of the practitioner, the experiential concommitants of a genetically coded "universal sign." In some individuals, under some circumstances, a state of "jnana" or absorption into the universal sign may occur, usually initially for a brief interval, wherein the universal sign comprises the entirety of the practitioner's phenomenal experience. With sustained practice such intervals may last for considerable periods of time.

5/ TRANSCENDENCE: Sustained practice producing jnana with one or more universal signs may in rare cases result in transcendent awareness. I speculate that this state may result from dis-entrainment of the universal sign. This "highest jnana" is described in Buddhist hermeneutics as "mind only."
(the above based on Laughlin et al 1979 and Webber 1979)

Jnana and Mind/Brain

At first the experiences or jnana are of very short duration. They have, however, profound after-effects. I have limited experience of this sort, but have, on occasion experienced re-orientations in phenomenal experience lasting for more than a day as the result of such momentary approximations of jnana as I have produced in meditation. Again, a range of informants have described similar experiences of varying intensity.

It would appear that a moment of such jnana can produce profound if temporary alterations in experience and behaviour lasting for hours or even days. A number of informants reported that single experiences of that type provided more than enough motivation to sustain months of meditation practice. The Tibetan, Hindu, and Christian mystical literatures abound with accounts of practitioners whose phenomenological re-orientations were predicated upon single moments of jnana.

Webber (1979) suggests that entrainment of deep neurognostic structures has as consequence the triggering of sets of neurosecretory changes which are specific to the universal model with resultant alterations in the physiological processes underlying not only awareness, but also other Ec processes.

The notion is supported by my experience, the reports of my practitioner informants and Lama teachers that the types of behavioral and experiential alterations which occur are specific to penetration by particular outer signs, and consequently are specific to the activation of particular universal signs.

Thus it is suggested that the activation of a given universal sign is associated with neurosecretive changes i.e. changes in brain chemistry which have far-reaching behavioral and phenomenological consequences. It is possible that such neurosecretive changes comprise part of the neurological basis for the ritual transformation of experience.

This contention is supported by an impressive body of related literature. We know, for example that various forms of meditative absorption produce neurosecretive changes (Prince 1982a & b, Jilek 1982, Katz 1982, Henry 1982). We also know that changes in social variables such as dominance position (in primates, e.g. vervet monkeys) produce dramatic neurosecretive changes which are associated with profound behavioral changes in monkeys (Raleigh et al I.P.) and profound experiential changes in humans. It would seem logical to suggest that the entrainment of deep lower order models would involve far reaching neurophysiological and cognitive consequences.

Transcendence

The model thus activated in awareness by means of Jnana (absorption) in the universal sign constitutes, for my informants, a primordial attribute of consciousness, or basic element. Such a "building-block" of consciousness is still considered to be delusory, but is thought to be a much more "refined" or subtle delusion. Consequently, Jnana in the universal sign represents great progress for the initiate. Repeated entrainment of universal signs is thought to enhance the development of what Lama Govina has called a "multi-dimensional" consciousness upon which transcendence may be predicated.

While I received few detailed teachings at this level, (they are reserved for practitioners who have attained, or are close to attaining this level of penetration) this tantric system is predicated upon the assumption that repeated Jnana in the universal sign (or signs) will yield yet a further transformation in awareness, that of transcendance. This is the experience of the symbolic field upon which the elements are transforms. This further transformation may be contingent upon dis-entrainment of the low-order genetically based neurognostic model upon which the jnana experience is predicated yielding the experience (if one could call it an experience) of pure consciousness, mind-only, sunyata, God, Buddha.

IN CONCLUSION

The present work began with the suggestion that our strategies for modelling the ritual initiation process have emphasized the study of ritual with reference to its manifest influence on other aspects of cultural systems. I argued that while such an orientation is indeed useful for the study of society, its exclusive application imposes unacceptable limits upon our exploration of ritual initiation. I suggested that it would be fruitful to study ritual initiation within its own stated terms of reference.

Those terms of reference, for any tantra-like ritual complex, have as their central theme the profound transformation of the initiates' world-view. Such transformations are understood to constitute long-term radical changes in the kinds and patterns of elements and forces of which the initiates' "reality" (cognized environment) is composed.

Such a position has, as its beginning assumption, the notion that man's cognitive equipment is capable of setting itself to function in multiple modes such that individuals may, under some circumstances, experience states of awareness as different from ordinary experience as the normal waking state is from a dream-state. Thus we assume that man can experience multiple "realities." We might use the term "central phase materialism" to denote the tendency for a given culture to ascribe reality status to one reality over another.

I also suggest, as would the "Sapir/Whorf hypothesis," that communication media, including the spoken language, which are predicated upon shared state-specific experience, set limits upon the probable experience available to culture members. Thus, to some extent, an individual's enculturation determines the range of phases of consciousness which he will experience, and about which he will be able to communicate with other members of his society. It follows that enculturation, which can only take place through communication about shared experience, will not take place within phases of consciousness which a given culture does not recognize as the stuff of "reality." Consequently, a So (Northern Uganda) youth is trained to remember his dream-life, to be able to recall dreams, to act upon his dream world, and to be able to integrate dream experience with his waking-experience in a holistic way (Laughlin 1978 - personal communication). North American youths on the whole are essentially unsocialized in this regard.

Furthermore, there exist within most societies, epistemological elites which predicate their knowledge upon alternate-phase experience for which access may require years of training. It is generally accepted that the adept cannot describe his experiences in "ordinary" terms. The non-adept has not had the experiences to which the adept must refer, which are the building blocks of shared experience upon which abstract communication depends.

The adept can only communicate his changed experience of the world to the student by helping him to generate the sequence of experiences which, for him, were its antecedent. As the amount of shared experience between teacher and student increases, it is increasingly possible for the teacher to communicate with the student on an abstract level.

In concert with this proposition I suggested that one of the functions of ritual initiation is to enable the practitioner to gain access to a meta-language capable of entraining (subsuming, integrating) all of the elements and relations which comprise more than one culture-bound discrete phase of consciousness. I chose to study the Tibetan tantric systems because they purport to embody such a facilitative language in their ritual complexes.

In order to provide a conceptual infrastructure within which to examine Tibetan intiation ritual, I introduced the concepts of cognized environment and operational environment in Chapter Two. I agreed that it is the "zone of uncertainty," - the set of effects for which there are no perceived causes - which is addressed by ritual.

The concept of cognized environment subsumes both the realm of experience and its unconcious antecedents. I argued however, that most theorists have wrongly assumed that such uncertainties are resolved exclusively at the level of surface structure. Instead, it was suggested that, at least in the case of genuine adepts within tantra-like systems, the ritual "answer" may constitute surface level encodings of patterns of information designed to facilitate profound alterations in the elements and processes antecedent to awareness.

I maintain that western culture, and especially the sub-culture of scientists which controls western formal epistemology is essentially mono-phasic in its understanding of the process of knowing. Given that many of our informants' orientations to knowledge are poly-phasic it would seem likely that our attempts to model the world-views of our informants will be biased in the direction of our own central phase materialism. It is necessary then that we challenge the myth of objectivity in science. I suggested that Transpersonal anthropology represents a strong challenge to that root fallacy. We need to develop a meta-paradigm which recognizes human consciousness as its most sensitive instrument, and as my informants would argue, our most accurate one, once "calibrated."

Consequently, I suggested that it would be necessary to include a transpersonal approach in our methodological repertoire.

I suggested further that after the initiation system had been heuristically addressed in its own terms, i.e. within its own parameters as determined by its intended operating environment, and the "fruits" derived, we might then begin to examine the yield in terms of alternate hermeneutic configurations. Initial use of the host culture's hermeneutics is essential for these form both a part of the technology, and the conceptual and phenomenological context in which it evolved.

The purpose of this work has been to examine one set of transformation strategies. I have worked with and studied under individuals who are purported to have used these tools for transformation successfully.

I was interested in understanding the changes manifest in the cognized realities of the adepts themselves, with the efficacy or lack of efficacy of their practices, and with the result of those practices.

To begin, we discover that Tibetan tantrikas do not accept the mind/matter, self/other, distinctions upon which western science is predicated. The epistemology of Tantra addresses these assumptions as "delusion" and attempts to resolve the dichotomy which humans perceive between their phenomenology and "external" reality.

For a tantric adept the phenomenological is not separate from the physical, but rather is its fulfillment. Tantra is a set of strategies facilitative of the development of perspective on one's own experience, one's own mind. For this reason tantra does not constitute the exploration of the unknown, but rather is an attempt to affect the realization in awareness of the source of the known. Since the tantric system is dedicated to effecting adaptive transformations in the cognized environments of its practitioners, tantric structural models take the form of sets of psychotrophic techniques designed to entrain in phenomenology the symbolic field upon which the initiate's ordinary world-view consists in a constellation of sets of transformations.

For my informants, the world of experience is predicated upon nested sets of cognitive models which are antecedent to awareness and which collectively comprise the deluded mind of the initiate. As such, that which we have called the cognized environment constitutes a vast array of interdependent delusions which provide no benchmark against which the veridicality of our perceptions may be gauged.

From this perspective, the only basis for non-delusional awareness is the experience of sunyata, or consciousness without an object. It is believed that the initiate, using what amount to access strategies, generating the experience of that which is the precursor to "ordinary" experience, and ultimately the precursor to one's state of being, may engender a new and more veridical phenomenology. This constitutes a "direct experience of being" not mediated by a world-view or "cognized environment" at all. Consequently tantric teachers present their initiates with models (e.g. deities and related technique) for the purpose of facilitating adaptive transformation of their phenomenology in the direction of isomorphism with that greater symbolic field.

Specifically the initiate is trained to create a symbolic allegory of the phenomenal world. This internally generated allegory constitutes the mental tool or "path" which will facilitate the initiate's freeing himself of the illusion of an inherently existing phenomenal world. Having thus entrained as aggregate symbols the models underlying "ordinary" experience in the form of the mandala of the deity, the initiate proceeds to fold that mandala in upon itself. Higher order symbols are folded in upon each other to comprise their lower-order antecedents as the mandala is dissolved into its most basic constituent symbols.

Through thousands of years of phenomenological experimentation, tantric adepts have developed the specific symbolic arrays and sequences whereby symbol sets are "unfolded" out from each other in the initiate's visualization and then folded in upon each other.

In this search for maximally effective symbols and visualization sequences a number of tantras have emerged which present a range of options with regard to the high-order symbols which constitute the universe of the deity. It is my experience though that tantric sadhanas invariably adhere to the fundamental principle whereby the initiate re-creates his reality at the level of aggregate symbols and eventually dissolves that reality, folding the symbols in upon each other until the final symbol is dissolved into sunyata - the "Great Symbol."

My informants clearly believe that the logic of such sadhanas is transparent to any practitioner who has experience of the lower order symbolic fields, the lower order models upon which tantric sadhanas are predicated. Several teachers agreed that a very advanced adept would not need to have a new tantra explained to him, that its logic would be readily apprehended as a set of transforms upon familiar structures. To the individual with limited insight however, two practices might appear to be very different, perhaps even contradictory. It is accepted that different individuals are likely to benefit maximally from different teachers, and different practices.

In an effort to create bridge concepts I have, in the present chapter, presented a model of the symbolic function in man with reference to its adaptive significance in enabling the organism to interact efficiently with its operational environment.

The symbolic function is conceptualized here as that process whereby a pattern of energy in the operational environment produces a pattern of neural stimulation sufficient to activate a neurognostic model the intentionality of which embodies more information than than does the initiating pattern of energy. Minimally the symbolic function is operating where a sensory stimulus evokes a neurognostic model such that the individual's cognitive/affective response to the stimulus is based upon more information than is actually contained in the stimulus array.

Specifically, the symbolic function allows the organism to minimize experimentation by permitting the evocation of large and complex cognitive models in awareness by minimal stimulus arrays. At this point we can easily bridge to the Tibetan concept of "delusion" which is predicated upon the misattribution of the whole from the part.

I suggested that the reality we experience is the product of the process whereby complex models are built upon sets of lower order models, each level predicated upon the symbolizing function and embodying consequent "delusion." Thus, the cognized environment of an adult human is the result of concatenated delusions within and across perceptual and conceptual functions. A parallel may readily be drawn between this model and the Tibetan model of the "interdependent origination" of all phenomena.

Such a model implies that an understanding of the nature of mind requires that we attempt to model, at the level of deep structure, the models which are antecedent to awareness. Semiotic structuralists and biological structuralists have attempted to do just this within their respective orientations. My Tibetan informants might be labelled "phenomenological structuralists" in this sense.

The Tibetan tantric systems are ones in which sophisticated techniques are used to introduce symbols into the cognized environment of the initiate such that deep structural models which collectively represent the innate cognitive potential in the organism of man are activated and potentially integrated in his reality experience. I have suggested that activation of such primordial models which are normally extrinsic to the cognized environment produces changes in the brain chemistry of the practitioner associated with long-term structural alterations in the Ec.

I characterize tantric initiation as an ongoing process which continues throughout the duration of an individual initiate's lifetime. The initial formal initiation, the wang kur, consists in an introduction to, and training in, a set of mental skills and specific practices such that throughout the practitioner's lifetime a process self-initiation is engendered. Ideally the practice is continuously "unfolded" as the initiate successively penetrates to deeper levels of awareness.

In practice the individual is likely to require further teaching and refinement of technique as his practice progresses. Hence contact with the guru is deemed essential. This is, in part, the case because teachings relevant to practitioners who have unfolded their practice are given only in rudimentary form to novice practitioners. It is accepted that advanced teachings would only confuse the initiate who has not generated the experience required in order to comprehend them.

A "penetration technique" is employed in order to entrain "deep" models which comprise a greater symbolic field which is inherently potential in man. As conceptualized by my informants the practices described in the present work are designed to address that greater symbolic field which, when fully entrained in the cognized environment, constitutes the "Buddha Nature" which is potentially manifest in all humans.

I conclude then, that Tibetan tantric initiation rituals and subsequent pedagogy consist in techniques for the introduction of symbolic material conjunctive with technique. Collectively, these initiations and teachings are strategies for "unpacking" the constellations of interdependent neurognostic models upon which the initiate's reality experience is predicated. This symbolic unpacking is structured in such a manner as to facilitate the dis-entrainment of such higher order models, and to facilitate the entrainment, in the awareness of the initiate, of underlying, genetically-based neurognostic models (the experience of which I have termed the "universal sign") upon which his experience of "reality" is predicated.

The foregoing analysis implies a universal basis for human religious ritual. As such its postulates are cross-culturally testable. As I suggested earlier, a wealth of ethnographic data exists regarding ritual practice, and our informants' reports of related subjective experience. The theoretical position I have outlined will facilitate the integration in our models of conventional ethnographic data, transpersonally derived data, and also information from the neurosciences relevant to transpersonal experience.

As I suggested earlier (p.85), the ethnographic data and analysis presented herein demonstrates the need to develop extensive neuroscience data-sets relevant to the ritual control of experience. Similarly, I have argued for the need to collect and develop a taxonomy for phenomenological data relating to ritually induced alternate phases of consciousness.

Equally importantly this analysis of human ritual, based upon a set of Tibetan tantric teachings consists in a model of mind and a complex statment regarding the nature of our species. I would remind the reader that my infomants are heir to carefully preserved oral traditions which have evolved over several thousand years of esoteric ritual practice which has been consciously evaluated with regard to its epistemological efficacy. Nor has this research lacked rigour. Not only have many of my lama informants completed many decades of intense mental training, their teachers have been in the position to guide the tantric practices of large numbers of initiates and collect data regarding the phenomenological outcomes.

It is clearly necessary for western scientists to examine Tibetan psychological technique both with, and without, reference to Tibetan Buddhist tantric hermeneutics. It will be necessary to examine physiological as well as phenomenological correlates of tantric practice.

Such an enterprise will inevitably require the reformulation of our à priori assumptions regarding the nature of mind and the process of knowing.

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